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President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 10

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

The President: This morning, the General Assembly, in accordance with the decision taken at its 4th plenary meeting on 19 September 1997, will first take up agenda item 10, entitled "Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization", to hear a brief presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report.

I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: Congratulations, Mr. President, on your election to this important post, made all the more so by the weighty deliberations through which you will be guiding this Assembly.

I am grateful for the opportunity to address the General Assembly just before the general debate begins. This is the first time in the 52-year history of the Organization that the Secretary-General has been so honoured.

My presence here today reflects the importance that you attach to the proposals for United Nations reform I presented to Member States on 16 July 1997. Indeed, let this be the Reform General Assembly. Let it be remembered as a time when all of us joined forces and seized the opportunities created by the new era to revitalize our United Nations — this unique and universal instrument for concerted action in pursuit of the betterment of humankind.

Before I turn to the issue of reform, permit me to say a few words about the ongoing work and challenges of the Organization and to raise several matters of serious international concern that require urgent attention.

In my recently released annual report, I described myself as prudently optimistic about the overall state of the United Nations today.

The past year's progress includes the adoption of the Agenda for Development, expressing a new consensus to guide our activities in this critically important field. It includes major achievements in disarmament, particularly the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Ottawa process to ban anti-personnel landmines, which I have vigorously supported.

In the area of peacekeeping, significant movement is taking place among a group of countries towards forming a standby high-readiness brigade within the framework of United Nations standby agreements. Such a brigade would enable the Organization to act in crises before they unravel into escalating spirals of violence.

Responding to ever more frequent requests from Member States, we have expanded our programmes in

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support of good governance, democratization and strengthening national capacity to promote human rights.

My annual report also acknowledges disappointments. The benefits of economic globalization remain too concentrated to benefit the vast majority of developing countries, even as official development assistance continues to decline.

New paradigms of cooperation are needed in which major increases in assistance are combined with selective debt relief, access to markets and investment strategies. All societies, including those currently marginalized by the forces of globalization, must have the opportunity to become active participants in the new international economy.

The achievements of disarmament do not yet encompass the remaining nuclear stockpiles, nor have they contained the proliferation of light weapons and small arms, including in conflicts that the United Nations is mandated to resolve. The department for disarmament and arms regulation that I have proposed is intended to bolster the capacity of the Organization to pursue such aims.

What is more, in a growing number of conflicts, civilian populations have become the explicit targets of factional combatants and humanitarian missions have been impeded, denied access and subjected to attacks.

Violence against women has become the most pervasive human rights violation, respecting no distinction of geography, culture or wealth.

We will have to erase these ugly stains from the canvas of contemporary life.

The nineteenth special session of the General Assembly — Rio +5 — made it clear that little progress has been made in achieving or implementing the agreements reached at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. We must do better at Kyoto in December and secure legally binding commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which we know to cause global warming.

I also draw your attention to several areas of ongoing concern that you may wish to address during this debate.

Since assuming office in January, I have taken initiatives to begin or revive peace processes in several conflict situations, some of which have long defied resolution. To that end, I have appointed special representatives for Western Sahara, Cyprus, East Timor, the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, Somalia and Afghanistan. A breakthrough may be at hand in Western Sahara and signs of hope glimmer elsewhere.

In Afghanistan, however, despite our best efforts, the parties continue to wage a brutal and futile civil war, with heavy civilian casualties. A renewed commitment on the part of regional and international actors is required to prevent further bloodshed and a humanitarian crisis of dreadful proportions.

In the Great Lakes region, despite the combined efforts of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, bitter legacies persist, as do intolerance and violence. I urge the countries of the region to pursue the path of peace, democracy, reconciliation and reconstruction — with full respect for human rights — and to work with the international community to assist and sustain their efforts.

In Bosnia, the international community must be prepared to consolidate the gains achieved and to prevent a relapse into the horrors that triggered its involvement. We must ensure that our collective investments — military, political and financial — have not been in vain. Doing so will require patience and persistence by all concerned.

Finally, the international community cannot but view with grave concern the mounting threats to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. We call on all sides to take the courageous decisions required to re-establish mutual confidence and rededicate themselves to achieving a lasting peace.

I now turn to the item on your agenda that surely is the most significant for the future role of our Organization: the challenge of reform.

I presented detailed proposals to you in this Hall more than two months ago, on 16 July 1997. It is my hope that when this session ends more than two months from now, we will have reached consensus and can begin the process of implementation. Permit me to recapitulate the main objectives and key features.

What are the objectives of the reforms? We aspire to a United Nations that can act with greater unity of purpose, coherence of efforts and responsiveness in pursuit of peace and progress; a United Nations that can

focus on its priorities; a United Nations that empowers both Governments and people to realize goals through collaboration that might otherwise elude them; a United Nations that will express the highest moral aspirations of humankind even as it delivers practical benefits to men, women and children in cities and villages around the world.

We aspire to a United Nations that recognizes and joins in partnership with an ever more robust global civil society, while helping to eliminate uncivil elements like drug traffickers, criminals and terrorists; a United Nations that will view change as a friend — not change for its own sake, but change that permits us to do more by doing what we do better.

For whom do we seek these objectives? We seek them for those who most need a renewed and revitalized United Nations because they lack the power and wealth to shape the international environment to their advantage. We seek them for the global public interest. We seek them in the interest of the future of the Organization itself.

And how do we propose to meet these objectives? By rationalizing and streamlining our operations at Headquarters and in the field. By creating new management structures that will permit us to act as one within and across our diverse areas of activities. By encouraging a new institutional culture that stresses excellence in promoting the collective good. By enhancing the accountability that Member States deserve and creating the flexibility that the Secretariat needs.

And we intend to meet these objectives by promoting at all times the particular needs of the most disadvantaged societies among us through the creation of the United Nations development group, a new office of development financing, a new system of multi-year pledges for development cooperation and a development dividend funded from administrative savings, as well as by strengthening the role of the Economic and Social Council, especially in the area of macroeconomic dialogue.

Momentum has been building since I announced the reform package on 16 July. Press reports from around the world have been encouraging. Individual Governments as well as groups of Governments have expressed support. Civil society organizations and the private sector are approaching us with ever greater frequency to work with us and to lend their assistance.

The extraordinarily generous and historically unprecedented $1 billion gift from Mr. Ted Turner for the United Nations work in the development, environment and humanitarian fields is the most visible expression of this new and promising relationship.

Lastly, I fully expect to have implemented those reform measures that are within my own jurisdiction before the end of this calendar year.

Now I ask you, the Member States, to act. Some of you I ask to do what your legal obligations require: to liquidate your arrears and to pay your future assessments in full, on time and without conditions.

All of you I ask to move expeditiously to consider the package of reforms that is before you, with the aim of reaching political consensus and providing budgetary authority before this session ends. We live in a new day, and it requires a new way. Therefore, let this be the Reform Assembly. This is the moment to re-imagine the role of the United Nations, giving it new life for the new century.

When I launched my reform plan, I pledged to narrow the gap between aspiration and achievement at the United Nations. I say to you today that we must move to close another gap — the one between the rhetoric and the reality of the common world. To close that gap we need the most effective instrument possible for collective deliberation and concerted action. The United Nations can be that instrument, just as the Charter envisioned it, provided that we act and we act now. This is our chance. We must not let it pass.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his very important statement.

We have concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 10.

Agenda item 9

General debate

The President: Before giving the floor to the first speaker in the general debate, I should like to remind members of the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 4th plenary meeting, on 19 September, that congratulations should not be expressed inside the General Assembly Hall after a speech has been delivered.

In this connection, may I also remind members of another decision, taken by the Assembly at the same

meeting, that speakers in the general debate, after delivering their statements, would leave the Assembly Hall through room GA-200, located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

I should also like to remind representatives that, in accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 4th plenary meeting, the list of speakers will be closed on Wednesday, 24 September, at 6 p.m. May I request delegations to be good enough to provide estimated speaking times that are as accurate as possible. This will facilitate the work of the Secretariat.

I now give the floor to the first speaker in the general debate, the Minister of External Relations of Brazil, His Excellency Mr. Luiz Felipe Lampreia.

Mr. Lampreia (Brazil): On behalf of the Brazilian delegation, I would like to congratulate you, my dear colleague, Hennadiy Udovenko, the Foreign Minister of Ukraine, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. Brazil has a significant and active community of Ukrainian origin. We Brazilians are thus very glad to see this session headed by a distinguished son of the Ukraine, a country that is close to us.

I want to express my recognition to the Permanent Representative of Malaysia, Ambassador Razali Ismail, for the way he conducted the work of the fifty-first session. Ambassador Razali's dynamic presidency paved the way, through extensive consultation, for an imaginative and comprehensive proposal to advance Security Council reform.

I also pay tribute to our new Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, chosen to oversee the political and administrative challenges of modernization. He has been the focus of justifiable expectation on the part of the international community at a difficult moment in the life of our Organization.

We welcome the Secretary-General's proposals for reform and institutional strengthening as a sign of renewed vitality within the United Nations. These proposals and Ambassador Razali's contribution will certainly warrant close attention in the General Assembly and in parallel consultation. We will help to consolidate a new spirit that should inspire our Organization. This new spirit is called leadership — that driving force of history altering the course of events within countries and in the international scenario, opening new horizons, giving hope to the peoples of the world, seeing movement where some can only stand still.

Ambassador Razali and Secretary-General Kofi Annan have, in a way, revived the leadership of the creators of the United Nations. They have shown the same idealism in establishing goals and pragmatism in carrying them out. It was also the leadership of men such as Dag Hammarskjöld and Brazilian statesman Oswaldo Aranha, twice President of this Assembly, that often led the United Nations to a decisive role as a factor of change in international relations.

This kind of leadership has given the world a forum without parallel in history, a stage for negotiation and a political force in favour of international peace and security. Although the United Nations has not always been able to prevent or to deter conflict, it has certainly reduced its occurrence and avoided some of its more serious consequences. For this reason, the United Nations has been a mandatory reference, a sign of hope and a moral force for world public opinion.

We are witnessing today the rebirth of this leadership, feeling its effects through a remarkable change in the heart and soul of our Organization. There is greater optimism. There is greater motivation among delegates and staff. There is greater expectation on the part of many Governments. A new atmosphere of hope embraces the United Nations. This is something we must nurture and promote — something we must filter to the public in order to renew the trust of the international community in our Organization.

The agenda of the fifty-second session is vast and reveals the continuing complexity and the numerous conflicts of interests that animate international relations in our times. A new international dynamic combines three positive impulses: first, modernization and political and economic opening in most countries; secondly, economic integration in regional contexts, with multiple political and security benefits; and thirdly, the internationalization of the economy on a global scale.

These impulses tend to generate, foster and consolidate international peace and security. They are based on confidence and understanding and should allow us to prosper and achieve the desired material and spiritual results. Economic integration is increasingly the great bulwark of international peace and cooperation. It must be given emphasis and further promoted.

Precisely because of its many political and economic benefits, integration is a defining trait of South America's reality, a direct consequence of democracy and economic freedom. The Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), a new and powerful impetus for development in the region, is an example of the importance of integration. With democracy firmly rooted and a dynamic process of integration, South America has a reduced potential for conflict. It has the lowest rates of military spending in the world and is following an economic course based on strict government budget controls. Our priorities are stability and development. Arms purchases are compatible with the defense needs of Latin American countries. They are aimed at replacing obsolete or exhausted equipment. Recently announced measures in the strategic-military domain will not affect these fundamental parameters.

The concrete interests that bring together the countries of South America — trade, investment and the reinforcement of our international standing through MERCOSUR — are an unyielding factor of unity and cohesion. There is no threat of military destabilization in Latin America. There is no danger of an arms race in the absence of political, economic and strategic conditions for such. A regional initiative towards self-imposed limitations on conventional arms purchases is therefore unjustified. It would be tantamount to disarming those already disarmed.

Our preoccupation, on the other hand, should be the fight against the arms trade that sustains organized crime and drug trafficking. This is the real and grave problem perpetuating a major source of instability that has, unfortunately, also affected our region severely. Only determined and coordinated action on the part of the international community, especially through tighter controls on the production and selling of weapons in private hands, can curb or even suppress this trade; which feeds crime cartels and leads to violence, fear and desperation. Brazil strongly urges all countries, and particularly those in the Western Hemisphere, to intensify cooperation in the fight against arms trafficking.

We have taken great strides in areas of concern and growing visibility. Disarmament and, most specifically, efforts towards the elimination of anti-personnel landmines have increasingly held the attention of the international community. Today, we can speak of significant accomplishments, such as the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the willingness of an overwhelming majority to make firm commitments, expressed at the Oslo Conference on anti-personnel landmines.

In these two instances, Brazil has sought to add its own efforts to those of the international community. This was the main thrust of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's decision to submit the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to congressional approval. Brazil can and should make an additional contribution to nuclear disarmament. We want to take a constructive part in discussions within the framework created by the indefinite extension of the NPT, the most universal of disarmament treaties. This is also the guideline for our participation in the Oslo conference and in the Ottawa process. Brazil stands firmly behind the interdiction of landmines in all types of conflict.

The international community should do everything in its power to help poor countries devastated by war. They suffer the perverse and prolonged effects of landmines irresponsibly planted in their territories. The interdiction of anti-personnel landmines and their removal must become an effective commitment on the part of the international community. This a question of ethics, a question of observing the most elementary principles of humanitarian law. We hope that the international convention agreed upon in Oslo and the important commitments it enshrines find universal acceptance.

These positive tendencies might lead to the impression that the United Nations is less in demand today than 10, 20 or 50 years ago. This is a false impression. We are still subject to the effects of disintegrating factors. Some are, unfortunately, by-products of new global trends, such as marginalization within and among nations, transnational crime and conflicts of interest that find expression through violence and the threat or use of force.

The persistent and overbearing nature of terrorism continues to be one of the most serious threats to international peace and development. It breeds despair and suffering. In the Middle East, terrorism and intolerance jeopardize a peace process that was once full of promise for the peoples of the region. In other countries, some of them in Latin America, terrorist acts reveal the existence of groups that still insist on employing tactics incompatible with the values of civilization and human dignity. We must not falter in condemning those who, in disregard of all moral values, resort to cowardly violence in seeking to advance their own obscure purposes. Brazil is emphatic in repelling these practices and exhorts the

international community to spare no effort in the fight against terrorism, whatever its form or the alleged reasoning behind it.

In addition, conflicts that had apparently been surmounted by a spirit of understanding and constructive action on the part of the United Nations still show signs of resistance that demand a strong reaction from the international community. Angola is a case in point. Hope and promise cannot be constantly undermined by the factors that have wrought so much destruction and suffering upon a valiant people to whom we Brazilians feel so closely linked. Angola is now a decisive test for the United Nations. We cannot accept even the slightest possibility of regression. Brazil, currently holding the presidency of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, calls upon the international community, and in particular the members of the Security Council, to exercise close scrutiny over the Angolan peace process. We must do everything to ensure that the people of Angola once again find the road of development in a context of democracy and pluralism.

The United Nations has an irreplaceable role in a world that still combines forces of integration and cooperation with forces of disintegration and aggression. But we have allowed the United Nations to lose its strength as an instrument of universal peace and understanding and as a promoter of cooperation and development. We have done this through inaction, through a lack of consensus, through obstructionism and through excessive politicization of issues. We must react to this situation. We must once again find the cardinal notion of leadership.

The past few years have shown that reform of the United Nations can no longer be put off. We cannot lose sight of major institutional issues or waste further precious energy. The report of the Secretary-General entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" is thus timely and opportune. The Brazilian Government welcomes it with satisfaction and enthusiasm. The strength of our Organization derives from its universality and from the all-encompassing nature of its mandate. The United Nations must not be held to the performance of tasks better suited to other international organizations or specialized agencies.

We cannot be made prisoners of inertia, nor must we condemn our debates to irrelevancy. The General Assembly must urgently move towards an agenda focused on what is essential to ensuring a relevant role for the United Nations in international affairs. For the United Nations to make a difference and provide leadership in today's complex world, it must recover the original meaning of the Charter by concentrating on its essential mission: maintaining international peace and security, promoting justice and international law, strengthening cooperation for development, protecting human rights and providing humanitarian assistance.

Member States must create political conditions for effective action by the United Nations and make the commitment to setting priorities and eliminating the superfluous. Only then will our Organization as a whole — not just the Secretariat — be able to devote itself to those fundamental tasks. The Secretary-General has assumed a leadership role by putting forth ideas that must be objectively discussed by all Member States. Brazil is committed to working constructively with Mr. Kofi Annan on his proposals to strengthen our Organization.

Brazil has taken an active part in the debate on reform of the Security Council. We have adopted an open-minded and constructive approach because we believe this to be a central element in the reform of the Organization. Brazil has upheld a concept of reform that would strengthen the Council and the United Nations as a whole. It is not geared to the individual interests of any one country. We want the Council to be representative of contemporary international realities, as it was in its early years.

The Council must be enlarged both in its permanent membership, to take account of the industrialized and the developing worlds, and in its non-permanent membership, to allow for more frequent participation by interested States. We repudiate all discrimination in the conception or assignment of new seats. We must not create a third or fourth category of member. This would weaken and depreciate the participation of the developing world, and of Latin America in particular, in the reform process and in an enlarged Council.

We have always said that in identifying new permanent members we must exercise realism and pragmatism by means of a democratic selection process that leads to universally recognized representation without renouncing regional support. Brazil has expressed, through President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, its willingness to accept the responsibilities of permanent membership in the Security Council, if called upon by the international community to do so. In such a case, Brazil would be determined to carry out the role of permanent member as the representative of Latin America and the

Caribbean. We want our region to be present in the Security Council on a permanent basis and, through ample coordination and consultation, to have an even stronger collective voice.

The Brazilian Government notes with satisfaction that we are moving, if not towards consensus, at least in the direction of a significant majority in favour of certain basic notions about how to reform the Security Council, particularly enlargement of its permanent membership to take account of the developing world. The proposal by Ambassador Razali, presently under discussion in the Working Group, constitutes a firm basis for a negotiating process leading to a decision by the General Assembly. Ambassador Razali has helped us regain the ideal of Council reform as a means of strengthening the entire Organization. Our priority is now to define the most suitable format for an enlarged Security Council. This must be the prime focus of attention.

The international community needs a strong, efficient and ever-present United Nations. We will continue to rely on the political body with the universality and moral strength that, in the history of humankind, only the United Nations has been able to muster. We must display in this session the determination to create the conditions for the United Nations to be an effective instrument for promoting international peace and security. The same spirit of leadership that we have seen in the Secretary-General and in Ambassador Razali has driven many delegations. A new willingness to make a constructive contribution to the Security Council reform process and to other reforms is clearly felt by Member States. There is a new thrust to negotiations. There is leadership, as well as carefully crafted proposals. We must take advantage of this unique opportunity in the history of the United Nations. We must not let the moment pass. Reform has become more than a key concept; it has become the order of the day for the United Nations in 1997.

Let us do it with that "fierce urgency of now" felt by Martin Luther King, a symbol of political leadership and of the forces of change in our century. "This is no time", said King in his most famous speech,

> "to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquillizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time...".

Let us do it, then.

Address by Mr. William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States of America

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United States of America.

Mr. William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the United States of America, His Excellency Mr. William Jefferson Clinton, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Clinton: Five years ago, when I first addressed this Assembly, the cold war had only just ended and the transition to a new era was beginning. Now, together, we are making that historic transition. Behind us, we leave a century full of humanity's capacity for the worst and its genius for the best. Before us, at the dawn of a new millennium, we can envision a new era that escapes the twentieth century's darkest moments, fulfils its most brilliant possibilities and crosses frontiers yet unimagined.

We are off to a promising start. For the first time in history, more than half the people represented in this Assembly freely choose their own Governments. Free markets are growing, spreading individual opportunity and national well-being. Early in the twenty-first century, more than 20 of this Assembly's members — home to half the earth's population — will lift themselves from the ranks of low-income nations.

Powerful forces are bringing us closer together, profoundly changing the way we work, live and relate to each other. Every day, millions of our citizens on every continent use laptops and satellites to send information, products and money across the planet in seconds. Bit by bit, the information age is chipping away at barriers — economic, political and social — that once kept people locked in and ideas locked out. Science is unravelling mysteries in the tiniest of human genes and in the vast cosmos. Never in the course of human history have we had a greater opportunity to make our people healthier and wiser, to protect our planet from decay and abuse and to reap the benefits of free markets without abandoning the social contract and its concern for the common good.

Yet today's possibilities are not tomorrow's guarantees. We have work to do.

The forces of global integration are a great tide, inexorably wearing away the established order of things. But we must decide what will be left in its wake. People fear change when they feel its burdens but not its benefits. They are susceptible to misguided protectionism and to the poisoned appeals of extreme nationalism, and ethnic, racial and religious hatreds. New global environmental challenges require us to find ways to work together without damaging legitimate aspirations for progress. We are all vulnerable to the reckless acts of rogue States and to an unholy axis of terrorists, drug traffickers and international criminals.

These twenty-first-century predators feed on the free flow of information, ideas and people we cherish. They abuse the vast power of technology to build black markets for weapons, to compromise law enforcement with huge bribes of illicit cash and to launder money with the keystroke of a computer. These forces are our enemies. We must face them together because no one can defeat them alone.

To seize the opportunities and move against the threats of this new global era, we need a new strategy of security. Over the past five years, nations have begun to put that strategy in place through a new network of institutions and arrangements, with distinct missions, but a common purpose: to secure and strengthen the gains of democracy and free markets while turning back their enemies.

We see this strategy taking shape on every continent: in expanded military alliances, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), its Partnership for Peace and its partnerships with a democratic Russia and a democratic Ukraine; in free trade arrangements, such as the World Trade Organization and the global Information Technology Agreement, and in the movement towards free-trade areas by nations in the Americas, the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere around the world; in strong arms-control regimes, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; in multinational coalitions with zero tolerance for terrorism, corruption, crime and drug trafficking; and in binding international commitments to protect the environment and safeguard human rights.

Through this web of institutions and arrangements, nations are setting the international ground rules for the twenty-first century, laying a foundation for security and prosperity for those who live within them, while isolating those who challenge them from the outside. This system will develop and endure only if those who follow the rules of peace and freedom fully reap their rewards. Only then will our people believe that they have a stake in supporting and shaping the emerging international system.

The United Nations must play a leading role in this effort, filling in the fault lines of the new global era. The core missions it has pursued during its first half century will be just as relevant during the next half century: the pursuit of peace and security, promoting human rights and moving people from poverty to dignity and prosperity through sustainable development.

Conceived in the cauldron of war, the United Nations first task must remain the pursuit of peace and security. For 50 years the United Nations has helped prevent world war and nuclear holocaust. Unfortunately, conflicts between nations, and within nations, have endured. From 1945 until today, they have cost 20 million lives. Just since the end of the cold war, each year there have been more than 30 armed conflicts in which more than 1,000 people have lost their lives — including, of course, a quarter of a million killed in the former Yugoslavia and more than half a million in Rwanda.

Millions of personal tragedies the world over are a warning that we dare not be complacent or indifferent; trouble in a far corner can become a plague on everyone's house. People the world over cheer the hopeful developments in Northern Ireland, grieve over the loss of innocent lives and the stalling of the peace process in the Middle East and long for a resolution of the differences on the Korean peninsula, between Greece and Turkey or between the great nations of India and Pakistan as they celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of their birth.

The United Nations continues to keep many nations away from bloodshed: in El Salvador and Mozambique; in Haiti and Namibia; in Cyprus; and in Bosnia, where so much remains to be done but can still be done because the bloodshed has ended.

The United Nations record of service has left a legacy of sacrifice. Just last week we lost some of our finest sons and daughters in the crash of a United Nations helicopter in Bosnia. Five were American, five German, one Polish and one British — all citizens of the world we are trying to make, each a selfless servant of peace. The world is poorer for their passing.

At this very moment, the United Nations is keeping the peace in 16 countries, often in partnership with regional organizations such as NATO, the Organization of American States, the Association of South-East Asian

Nations and the Economic Community of West African States, avoiding wider conflicts and even greater suffering. Our shared commitment to more realistic peacekeeping training for United Nations troops, a stronger role for civilian police and better integration between military and civilian agencies — all these will help the United Nations fulfil these missions in the years ahead.

At the same time, we must improve the United Nations capabilities after a conflict ends to help peace become self-sustaining. The United Nations cannot build nations, but it can help nations build themselves by fostering legitimate institutions of government, monitoring elections and laying a strong foundation for economic reconstruction.

This week the Security Council will hold an unprecedented ministerial meeting on African security, which our Secretary of State is proud to chair, and which President Mugabe, Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, will address. It will highlight the role the United Nations can and should play in preventing conflict on a continent where amazing progress towards democracy and development is occurring alongside still too much discord, disease and distress.

In the twenty-first century our security will be challenged increasingly by interconnected groups that traffic in terror, organized crime and drug smuggling. Already, these international crime and drug syndicates drain up to $750 billion a year from legitimate economies. That sum that exceeds the combined gross national product of more than half the nations in this Hall. These groups threaten to undermine confidence in the fragile new democracies and market economies that so many of you are working so hard to see endure.

Two years ago I called upon all the members of this Assembly to join in the fight against these forces. I applaud the recent United Nations resolution calling on its Members to join the major international anti-terrorism conventions, making clear the emerging international consensus that terrorism is always a crime and never a justifiable political act. As more countries sign on, terrorists will have fewer places to run or hide. I also applaud the steps that Members are taking to implement the Declaration on Crime and Public Security that the United States proposed two years ago, calling for increased cooperation to strengthen every citizen's right to basic safety, through cooperation on extradition and asset forfeiture, shutting down grey markets for guns and false documents, attacking corruption and bringing higher standards to law enforcement in new democracies.

The spread of these global criminal syndicates also has made all the more urgent our common quest to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. We cannot allow them to fall into or remain in the wrong hands. Here too, the United Nations must lead, and it has led — from the United Nations Special Commission in Iraq to the International Atomic Energy Agency, now the most expansive global inspection system ever devised to police arms-control agreements.

When we met here last year, I was honoured to be the first of 146 leaders to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), our commitment to end all nuclear tests for all time, the longest-sought, hardest-fought prize in the history of arms control. It will help prevent the nuclear Powers from developing more advanced and more dangerous weapons. It will limit the possibilities for other States to acquire such devices. I am pleased to announce that today I am sending this crucial Treaty to the United States Senate for ratification. Our common goal should be for the CTBT to enter into force as soon as possible. I ask for of you to support that goal.

The United Nations second core mission must be to defend and extend universal human rights and to help democracy's remarkable gains endure. Fifty years ago the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated the international community's conviction that people everywhere have the right to be treated with dignity, to give voice to their opinions and to choose their leaders; that these rights are universal — not American rights, not Western rights, not rights for the developed world only, but rights inherent in the humanity of people everywhere.

Over the past decades these rights have become a reality for more people than ever, from Asia to Africa, from Europe to the Americas. In a world that links rich and poor, North and South, city and countryside in an electronic network of shared images in real time, the more these universal rights take hold, the more people who do not enjoy them will demand them. Armed with photocopiers and fax machines, e-mail and the Internet; supported by an increasingly important community of non-governmental organizations, they will make their demands known, spreading the spirit of freedom — which, as the history of the last 10 years has shown us, ultimately will prevail.

The United Nations must be prepared to respond — not only by setting standards but by implementing them. To deter abuses, we should strengthen the United Nations field operations and early-warning systems. To strengthen democratic institutions — the best guarantors of human rights — we must pursue programmes to help new legal, parliamentary and electoral institutions get off the ground. To punish those responsible for crimes against humanity, and to promote justice so that peace endures, we must maintain our strong support for the United Nations war-crime tribunals and truth commissions. And before the century ends, we should establish a permanent international court to prosecute the most serious violations of humanitarian law.

The United States welcomes the Secretary General's efforts to strengthen the role of human rights within the United Nations system and his splendid choice of Mary Robinson as the new High Commissioner for Human Rights. We will work hard to make sure that she has the support she needs to carry out her mandate.

Finally, the United Nations has a special responsibility to make sure that as the global economy creates greater wealth, it does not produce growing disparities between the haves and have-nots or threaten the global environment, our common home. Progress is not yet everyone's partner. More than half the world's people are two days' walk from a telephone, literally disconnected from the global economy. Tens of millions lack the education, the training and the skills they need to make the most of their God-given abilities.

The men and women of the United Nations have expertise across the entire range of humanitarian and development activities. Every day they are making a difference. We see it in nourished bodies of once-starving children, in the full lives of those immunized against disease, in the bright eyes of children exposed to education through the rich storehouse of human knowledge, in refugees cared for and returned to their homes and in the health of rivers and lakes restored.

The United Nations must focus even more on shifting resources from handouts to "hand ups", on giving people the tools they need to make the most of their own destinies. Spreading ideas and education and technology — the true wealth of nations — is the best way to give the people the chance to succeed.

The United Nations must continue to lead in ensuring that today's progress does not come at tomorrow's expense. When the nations of the world gather again next December in Kyoto for the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, all of us — developed and developing nations — must seize the opportunity to turn back the clock on greenhouse-gas emissions so that we can leave a healthy planet to our children.

In these efforts, the United Nations no longer can, and no longer need, go it alone. Innovative partnerships with the private sector, non-governmental organizations and the international financial institutions can leverage its effectiveness many times over. Last week a truly visionary American, Ted Turner, made a remarkable donation to strengthen the United Nations development and humanitarian programmes. His gesture highlights the potential for partnership between the United Nations and the private sector, in contributions of time, resources and expertise. I hope more will follow his lead.

In this area and others, the Secretary-General is aggressively pursuing the most far-reaching reform of the United Nations in its history — not to make the United Nations smaller as an end in itself, but to make it better. The United States strongly supports his leadership. We should pass the Secretary-General's reform agenda at this session.

On every previous occasion I have addressed this Assembly, the issue of our country's dues has brought the commitment of the United States to the United Nations into question. The United States was a founder of the United Nations. We are proud to be its host. We believe in its ideals. We continue to be, as we have been, its largest contributor. We are committed to seeing the United Nations succeed in the twenty-first century.

This year, for the first time since I have been President, we have an opportunity to put the question of debts and dues behind us once and for all and to put the United Nations on a sounder financial footing for the future. I have made it a priority to work with our Congress on comprehensive legislation that would allow us to pay off the bulk of our arrears and assure full financing of America's assessment in the years ahead. Our Congress's actions to solve this problem reflect a strong bipartisan commitment to the United Nations and to America's role within it. At the same time, we look to Member States to adopt a more equitable scale of assessments. Let me say that we also strongly support expanding the Security Council to give more countries a voice in the most important work of the United Nations.

In more equitably sharing responsibility for its successes, we can make the United Nations stronger and more democratic than it is today. I ask the General Assembly to act on these proposals this year so that we can move forward together.

At the dawn of a new century so full of hope but not free of peril, more than ever we need a United Nations where people of reason can work through shared problems and take action to combat them, where nations of goodwill can join in the struggle for freedom and prosperity and where we can shape a future of peace, progress and the preservation of our planet. We have the knowledge; we have the intelligence; we have the energy; we have the resources for the work before us. We are building the necessary networks of cooperation. The great question remaining is whether we have the vision and the heart necessary to imagine a future that is different from the past — necessary to free ourselves from destructive patterns of relations with each other and within our own nations and to live a future that is different.

A new century in a new millennium is upon us. We are literally present at the future, and it is the great gift we are obligated to leave to our children.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United States of America for the statement he has just made.

Mr. William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States of America, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by Mr. Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark.

Mr. Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark, Mr. Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Rasmussen (Denmark): First of all, I would like to refer to the intervention which will be made tomorrow by the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union. I should also like to congratulate the Foreign Minister of Ukraine on his election as President of the General Assembly.

Allow me to reflect a bit on the fact that three decades ago a Danish Prime Minister, Mr. Jens Otto Krag, presented our yearly address to the twenty-second session of the General Assembly. The challenges of today are not very similar to those of that time, and yet they are no less complex nor of lesser magnitude. For the United Nations to face these challenges, the Organization must adapt. It must reform, must change and must modernize. That is why reform must be a priority for this session of the General Assembly. And that, in all humility, is why I am here today: to support the Secretary-General and the General Assembly and to do what I can on behalf of my country in order to reach our goal at the end of this session and to help make decisions that are necessary in order to modernize and to reform.

Since the twenty-second session of the General Assembly, 30 years ago, we have seen disappointments. We have seen civil wars. We have seen frustrations, backlashes and incredible suffering. Yet we have also seen light. We have seen peace where war once raged. We have seen former enemies living peacefully together. Indeed, we have seen apartheid disappear. We have seen the Berlin Wall fall. We have seen the oppressed coming out of jails and being elected leaders of their countries, and some of them rank among the world's most outstanding leaders. We have seen the winds of change sweep over entire continents.

I believe this: if our generation cannot believe in the impossible, who can? If our generation cannot take the decisions that are necessary, who else can? All in all, I think this is of crucial importance for the United Nations.

A reform programme for the United Nations is not only about a more efficient use of scarce resources. It is also, and more importantly, about strengthening and revitalizing the Organization so that it can effectively carry out its core activities and meet the challenges of the future. It must be a reform closer to the people, a reform closer to non-governmental organizations and parliamentarians, a reform unifying Governments, the United Nations and peoples.

The core activities and priorities are very clearly described in the Secretary-General's reform programme. With great precision and clarity, the Secretary-General has spelled out elements that my Government fully subscribes to: peace and security, economic and social affairs; development cooperation; humanitarian affairs; and, as an activity cutting across the others, human rights — because human rights makes the United Nations the people's United Nations. These core functions of the United Nations are interdependent and mutually supportive. No amount of funding will create sustainable development without peace, good governance and respect for human rights. None of our efforts in the field of peace and security or humanitarian relief will have a lasting effect without efforts to create sustainable development.

Denmark gives its full support to the reform programme of the Secretary-General. We consider the programme, in its totality, to be a significant contribution towards strengthening the Organization and towards making it more responsive, legitimate and efficient. I also note the spirit of the Secretary-General in creating much greater motivation among the employees of the United Nations and much shorter lines between the Secretary-General and all the rest of the people working for our common goal and cause, here in this House and all around the world.

Reform is about shifting resources to the core functions of the United Nations: shifting resources from administration to development — in short, getting more value for money, centrally, on the national level and locally.

The reform programme constitutes a package. It should be dealt with by the General Assembly as such. The programme as a whole should receive the political endorsement of the Assembly in the coming weeks. My country endorses the package fully and wholly.

Ground-breaking work has been carried out on the way towards Security Council reform. Expansion of the membership of the Council is essential to enhance its legitimacy. At the same time, its effectiveness and decision-making capacity must be safeguarded. But — and I think that there is a "but" — we must unify in order to reform. We are gathered to reform, to open a new chapter of reforming and modernizing the United Nations.

It has to be said that no institution can discharge its functions without a sound financial basis. Member States' fulfilment of their financial obligations must be considered the touchstone of their attachment to the United Nations. I am not a billionaire; I am probably not even a millionaire. I am the Prime Minister of my country, and I know the way to go. I know, on behalf of my country, our obligations. I also know, on behalf of my country, the financial duties my country has. I therefore hope that this session will also be a turning point for all Member countries of the United Nations, because a sound financial basis first and foremost requires that Member States pay their contributions in full, on time and without any conditions. The contributions of Member States must be based on their capacity to pay. Therefore let us join, as we have done on the reform process, to finance the United Nations on its path to the next century.

Political instability, violence and the collapse of the structures of society have led to massive movements of refugee populations. Large numbers of people — millions of people — have fled to regions far from their homes. We are deeply concerned about this situation. We must do our utmost to support the humanitarian organizations in their efforts to assist refugees and other displaced persons as close to their local environments as possible: as close to their homes as possible.

Yet refugees and other displaced persons cannot return to their homes so long as anti-personnel mines remain scattered throughout the countryside, so long as human beings by the thousand are being injured or killed when they work their fields, so long as children cannot go to school without risking losing a limb on their way.

Mr. Secretary-General, you said it yourself in your speech in Oslo: you underlined that the very presence, or just the fear of the presence, of only one mine can stop the work in a whole village, can stop the work in a whole field, can make it impossible for families, or whole villages, to survive and to create proper living conditions. We must realize that, without mines, we would have countries that could double or triple their agricultural production and thereby help themselves. We must get rid of these anti-personnel mines and must do it today rather than tomorrow.

I look forward to the day when the last anti-personnel mine has been produced. That will be a good day for mankind. I look forward to the day when the last anti-personnel mine has been removed. That will be a good day for mankind, and that day must come soon. I look forward to the day when a United Nations convention will settle this matter so that it never comes before us again.

We must at the same time work at improving the basic conditions of life for ordinary people in areas of conflict. Only in this way can we prevent people from becoming permanent refugees.

In the past year we have once again experienced how quickly crises can break out in different parts of the world. This underlines the need for the international community to be able to react swiftly and in unity in order to prevent the spread of violence and human suffering. As the Secretary-General has noted, my country, Denmark, has taken the initiative to establish a multinational standby high readiness brigade (SHIRBRIG) within the framework of United Nations standby agreements. The planning element for the brigade was officially inaugurated by the Secretary-General earlier this month in my country. The initiative is being taken to increase the rapid-reaction capability, and it must be carried forward. Improvements in the planning capacity of the United Nations are under way and will help reduce the overall response time.

Capacity within other areas must be enhanced as well. Civilian police has proved crucial in many of the recent operations. We must improve both the capacity and the training of civilian police officers.

Next year we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of a major achievement in the history of mankind: the 1948 adoption by the General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The noble object of the Declaration is the protection of individuals — not the interests of States. All human beings are equal and deserve equal protection against abuse. Therefore the standards of the Declaration are by their very nature universal. Any denunciation of human rights obligations is unacceptable and demonstrates a lack of respect for human dignity.

On the subject of credibility, I wish to underline that a connection must also be made between violence and human rights violations and the consequences. I think, therefore, that a significant recent development since the adoption of the Declaration is the establishment of the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. I welcome the new High Commissioner, Mrs. Mary Robinson. She will receive our full support in her endeavours to promote and ensure universal respect for human rights.

But respect for human rights demands also international justice. After the Nuremberg trials we all believed that the Holocaust would never happen again, and yet new genocides are haunting us. Therefore, we need a permanent international criminal court. We will not allow crimes against humanity to go unpunished. This is a fundamental question of credibility, a fundamental question of consequence and of justice. Setting a precise date for a diplomatic conference in 1998 is essential to maintain the momentum for the early establishment of the court, by the end of this decade.

The need to assist the poorest countries is as important as ever. The poorest countries do not, I believe, attract sufficient private capital flows, nor do they have the potential to benefit from the liberalization of international trade. It is time for action. It is time to narrow the gap between rhetoric and action. I would remind the Assembly of the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen, and I would recall the obligations undertaken there and our vision of narrowing the gap between rhetoric and practical action. Education, health and participation for women are fundamentals.

The role of the United Nations system in the field of economic and social development is indispensable. I should like to emphasize in particular the importance of the United Nations as an Organization operating with a global mandate and on the basis of a global approach of sustainable development, security and good governance. Let me mention by way of example the World Conference on Women, held in Beijing. It should be a primary task for the United Nations system to ensure an effective follow-up to these conferences.

The United Nations should be at the forefront of the global efforts to ensure sustainable development for all. And yet let us be direct, clear and honest. The United Nations development organizations concerned are entirely dependent on voluntary contributions, and these have, regrettably, followed a decreasing trend in recent years. I think it is fair to say that the United Nations development organizations themselves can be partly blamed for the emerging funding crisis. All too often they have failed to cooperate. Many donors have been frustrated to see United Nations organizations engage in a costly competition for funds. The mere fact that it has not been possible until now for the United Nations organizations to establish common premises at the country level is an example of this situation.

Here again I feel that the Secretary-General's reform proposals are a significant contribution towards redressing this unfortunate situation. Let us have one coordinated United Nations house in each country, and let us not compete among United Nations organizations but

cooperate effectively. That is a vision that we want to follow and to support.

The many, many problems faced by minorities in our world, and not least by indigenous peoples, must be addressed in a coherent manner. We must ensure that indigenous peoples are given real influence on matters pertaining to them.

That is why my country, Denmark — in close cooperation with the indigenous population of Greenland — has called upon the United Nations and its Member States to establish, within the framework of the Economic and Social Council, a permanent forum for indigenous peoples. This forum should have a broad mandate to cover a wide range of issues. Indigenous peoples themselves must be ensured the possibility of active and effective participation in its establishment and in its function.

The United Nations is the future for all of us on this globe — a future that can be improved by closer cooperation with regional organizations. This cooperation must be strengthened. Since the political changes in Europe that began at the end of the 1980s, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has taken on an important role in that region. This role is a natural expression of its status as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. The OSCE cooperates closely with the United Nations in a number of areas. By taking on responsibility within its own geographical area, the OSCE contributes to the United Nations ability to deal with crises elsewhere.

As Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, my Foreign Minister has given high priority to strengthening the relationship between the OSCE and the United Nations. We have frequent contact with the Secretary-General and have encouraged closer relations between the secretariats.

Let me conclude. It is time for reform, as the Secretary-General so wisely said, and I should like in this connection to make three points.

My first point is that the reform programme put forward by the Secretary-General deserves our full support. If adopted, it will leave this Organization in much better shape. For the sake of our common future this is needed. Let us decide and let us follow up.

My second point is this: we need the United Nations, and the United Nations needs us. We must ensure the necessary funding for the world Organization and its development agencies. We must do this to make the world a better and safer place. Every Member must pay in full, on time, without conditions.

Finally, my third point: we must address the negative legacies of the past. We cannot solve the problem of refugees and displaced persons without making it possible for them to return to their homes. They cannot and will not do that as long as their physical well-being is threatened by inhumane anti-personnel mines and as long as their political future is threatened by war criminals who have not been brought to justice.

Human rights are not just about words. It should also be a human right to be able to live a secure life. At the World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen, we said, "You cannot any longer have secure States without secure people inside". This is what we need the United Nations to help us with.

This is not a perfect world, but I remain an optimist. With the United Nations as an organization for the people and by the people, we can make this world a better place. Let us join hands to make the twenty-first century a happier one.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Major-General Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka, Prime Minister, Minister with Special Responsibility for the Constitution Review and Minister for Regional Development and Multi-Ethnic Affairs of the Republic of Fiji

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by The Honourable Major-General Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka, Prime Minister, Minister with Special Responsibility for the Constitution Review and Minister for Regional Development and Multi-Ethnic Affairs of the Republic of Fiji.

The Honourable Major-General Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka, Prime Minister, Minister with Special Responsibility for the Constitution Review and Minister for Regional Development and Multi-

Ethnic Affairs of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister, Minister with Special Responsibility for the Constitution Review and Minister for Regional Development and Multi-Ethnic Affairs of the Republic of Fiji, His Excellency The Honourable Major-General Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Major-General Rabuka (Fiji): My country and my delegation warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. Your election to this high office is a tribute both to you and to your great country, Ukraine. I wish to assure you of my delegation's fullest cooperation during your tenure of office.

It also gives me great pleasure to convey our profound gratitude and appreciation to the outgoing president of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, who presided over the session with such consummate skill, expertise and diplomacy, and distinguished himself by his firm management of the session through his dedication to and thoroughness in the discharge of his assignment.

I am also pleased to extend our sincerest congratulations to the new Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan. My delegation is convinced that Mr. Annan will make an outstanding contribution to the role and responsibilities of the United Nations in international affairs and to the management of the Organization. We wish to reassure him of our fullest cooperation during his tenure of office.

The greatest challenge facing our world today is economic development, specifically the promotion of sustained economic growth with equitable social development, particularly in the developing countries of the world. For small island developing States like Fiji, and for many developing countries of the world in general, we need an international economic environment that is buttressed by economic justice. We need an international economic environment that ensures a better life in all the countries of the world and not in just a few. The slow pace of economic development and even the lack of such development in many countries of the world, circumscribed by the evils of unemployment and poverty, are threats to international peace and security.

This greatest challenge is growing more and more acute as economic development is being retarded by a number of policies, trends and unilateral actions which pervade our world today. Our development policies, plans and programmes are being seriously eroded by difficulties in accessing the markets of the developed countries, worsening terms of trade, inadequate capital flow for investment, spiralling debt burdens, protectionist tendencies, ambivalence in the transfer of technologies and exchange-rate volatility. Small countries like mine, and indeed all developing nations, have no real influence in these matters, except as victims.

The Charter of the United Nations calls for the promotion of the international economic and social advancement of all peoples. Implicit, if not explicit, in it is embedded the principle of economic justice. As Members of the United Nations, we have a collective moral and humanitarian obligation to help and assist each other. We have a collective duty to make our world a better place to live in. The time has come for the developed nations of the world, and all international organizations which can help, to cooperate and ensure justice by enabling developing countries in their own efforts towards the acceleration of sustained economic and social development.

There are a number of ways in which the developing countries can be assisted towards achieving sustained economic and social development. Developing countries, even those endowed with natural resources, are handicapped by a lack of capital to mobilize these resources to their advantage. Developing countries need continuous foreign-direct-investment capital flows to stimulate and sustain economic growth. Both foreign direct investment and private-sector investment are needed to help diversify and increase economic activities, especially where industrialization is an option.

Through the diversification of our economies we can produce more for export and trade. In fact, trade is the best means for sustained income generation and development. The present globalized international trade is ideally aimed at ensuring an open, secure, equitable, transparent and predictable multilateral system wherein all participants can benefit.

The reality we face is very different from this espoused ideal. We do not live in an ideal world, but in the real world, where international trade is dominated by the industrialized, developed nations. Fiji and other developing and least-developed countries of the world

have to compete for markets with industrial giants. The international-trade playing field is not level, despite frequent statements to that effect. In reality, there is no even playing field. It is in truth marked by inequalities of power, influence and resources, with steep and almost insurmountable heights constraining small nations like ours. In order for small countries like Fiji to survive and to develop, we must be allowed to retain special arrangements for our essential exports, which give our people social and economic security.

My country firmly believes that globalization is the phenomenon of today's international trade. The transformation of international trade rules from the Uruguay Round to the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been marked by rapid changes that can marginalize small developing countries like mine.

The appellate body of the WTO has significantly narrowed the scope of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)/WTO waiver to the European Community in respect of the Lomé Convention. Fiji is among other African, Caribbean and Pacific countries which will be adversely affected by these new arrangements if the arrangements of the Lomé Conventions are eroded. Furthermore, it has opened up room for policies and actions, leaving weak developing countries unprotected and exposed to economic stagnation.

While the WTO is insisting on a level-playing-field approach, peculiarities that pose problems for small island developing countries persist. As for Fiji, our smallness, remoteness and inaccessibility to foreign markets remain our biggest hurdles in international trade. Annual natural disasters, a consequence of the climatic conditions in our location, continue to be a big drain on the Government's savings in terms of rehabilitation projects. Such angry seasonal visitations of nature can wreak havoc on budget plans and our scarce resources.

Small island States like Fiji have a very limited range and volume of exports and they cannot and will not dominate and overwhelm any sector of trade commodities. In that context, my delegation is extremely disappointed at the recent decision of the World Trade Organization appeal body against banana exports from Caribbean countries to the European Union.

We are not asking for favours. We are merely making a plea for a sensible and reasonable transition period to enable us to adjust. This cannot be done overnight; thus, special arrangements must remain to allow us the opportunity to find means for accommodation and replacement.

The blind pursuit of free trade, resulting in dire consequences for small nations and leading to the loss of other fundamental freedoms, will not serve the purposes of eradicating poverty and eliminating social and economic inequalities. We seek an equality of opportunity in a world dominated by inequalities of resources and economic might.

The World Trade Organization must bring a sense of equity and justice in its deliberations and decisions, and consciously eschew paths which disadvantage even further already disadvantaged developing nations. We seek an equality of understanding for the position of the weak and the small. We seek the creation of genuine freedom in trade, for trade remains the best means for sustained development for developing nations.

The access of developing countries to new, environmentally sound technologies is also pivotal to economic development and sustained economic growth. There is a need for developing countries like Fiji to participate in, benefit from and contribute to the rapid advances in the technologies of developed, industrialized countries. Developing countries should be facilitated access to reliable information on environmentally sound technologies and helped in institutional development and capacity-building to accommodate the transfer of such technologies. Accessibility to knowledge for development is a right, the right of all nations, not merely of a powerful few to retain as a monopoly for their own selfish ends.

Official development assistance is an important catalyst for development, yet its value remains unrealized. Only four countries have met or surpassed the official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product. A renewed commitment to this target is essential in order to fulfil the imperatives established by the Charter of the United Nations. At this stage of our development, it is a much needed catalyst to our own efforts.

External debt repayments continue to be a major constraint on economic development and sustained economic growth in major developing countries. Burdensome debt repayments not only cause economic development to stagnate, but stifle social development as well. I call for the adoption of an effective and equitable development-oriented solution to the debt problem, so that

it ceases to be a burden yet remains a useful tool for sustained development.

I have emphasized economic growth for sustained development as the direction we must pursue. My country and Government are fully committed to this goal. Yet, for economic growth to be sustainable, as well as beneficial and of quality, the environmental factor must be brought to the forefront in all our development efforts.

Despite the convening of the recent special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review of the implementation of Agenda 21, there are still no clear commitments on the part of many developed countries to work towards achieving such environmental goals as, for instance, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to internationally specified levels. The South Pacific Forum island countries are among the most vulnerable to climate change in terms of sea level rise and global warming. It is therefore imperative that all members of the international community should strive for a firm political commitment before the next Kyoto Conference, to adopt a stronger protocol to strengthen the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

In this connection, my delegation joins others in expressing our appreciation to the private sector and civil society for the supportive interest they have shown in the search for an acceptable international solution to such global concerns. A most welcome demonstration of this is the recent donation of $1 billion by the Turner Foundation in support of certain crucial activities of the United Nations. We need more of such assistance to further sustain and strengthen the work of the United Nations in achieving its targets.

I would now like to turn my attention to the issue of international security. Today we are witnessing a most significant period of change in our world, a change which bodes well for permanent and lasting peace and security. The cold war has been over for some time now and the tensions and threats to peace and security which it generated are behind us. As a consequence, and with the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), we have moved a step further towards nuclear disarmament. While this is gratifying, there is much more to be done to achieve the objective of our Organization to turn our swords into ploughshares and our spears into pruning hooks.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has added to the impressive list of political and legal instruments intended to de-escalate the production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons. We have come a long way in our efforts to prevent a nuclear holocaust on our planet, but the existence and improvement of nuclear weapons still leaves the threat over us. The current international situation creates a favourable condition for the international community, and particularly nuclear-weapon States, to take steps towards eliminating nuclear weapons from our planet. While the CTBT is a step in the right direction, it lacks a clear time-frame for the removal of all nuclear weapons from our midst.

My delegation urges the international community to begin negotiations as soon as possible on a treaty to halt and prohibit, with acceptable verification, the production and development of all nuclear weapons. My delegation further urges the nuclear-weapon States to destroy all stockpiles and arsenals of nuclear weapons, with acceptable international verification, and thereby rid the world of nuclear weapons, once and for all.

My delegation warmly welcomes the finalization in Oslo last week of a draft treaty prohibiting the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retaining or transferring of anti-personnel landmines. We call on all nations of the world to sign and ratify the treaty.

In the achievement of all these objectives, whether they relate to sustained development or disarmament, the United Nations has a crucial role. It must possess a dynamism to be effective. It cannot be cumbersome, unwieldy and partial. To meet new challenges, the United Nations must be streamlined. A meaningful international organization such as ours must adapt to changes, enhancing its relevance and competence. The entire international community, including my country, has been calling for the reform of the United Nations. It has taken some time, but at last our new Secretary-General has presented his recommendations for a restructured Organization that can carry us over the threshold into the new millennium. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive, constructive and coherent recommendations.

My delegation will carefully study the bold and far-reaching recommendations for reform, and we endorse the proposals in principle. I make a plea that in the implementation of these reforms there must also be positive benefits for the small Member States, including their increased participation in the United Nations system. I am particularly pleased that the Secretary-General has

identified economic and social affairs, as well as development cooperation, as core activities. His proposals are congruent with the high priority which my delegation places on economic growth for sustained development. I have already stated that the United Nations must play a constructive and catalytic role, within its macroeconomic policies to facilitate economic growth for sustained development, thereby enabling developing countries, which constitute the vast majority of the Members of the Organization, to have an equal share in the opportunities for wealth creation.

I fully support the submission that peacekeeping will remain an indispensable instrument of the United Nations. My country, small though it is, has played its part in international peacekeeping programmes in virtually every theatre of the world since we joined the United Nations in 1970. In fact, in terms of size of population, Fiji is presently among the largest troop contributors to United Nations peacekeeping programmes. In the process, several of our peacekeepers have lost their lives. But as a nation we remain committed to the goal of permanent and lasting peace in our world. I might add here that it is a cause of great pride, but pride tempered with humility, that one of our nationals, Major-General Jioje Konrote, has been appointed Force Commander of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). It reflects the degree and extent of the commitment of our small nation of fewer than a million people towards the peace and security of our world.

The proposals for the reform of the United Nations encompass new management and efficiency measures which should reduce administrative costs, but the financial predicament of our Organization will not be resolved entirely by cost-cutting measures. It can be resolved if Member countries pay their contributions promptly. We call on all Member States which are in arrears to settle those arrears promptly, fully and without conditions.

As we press ahead with the reform of the United Nations, it becomes incumbent on us to ensure that this extends to the Security Council. My country continues to advocate that the Security Council should be expanded to reflect an equitable geographical distribution, taking into account the substantial increase in the membership of the United Nations. Reforms affecting the Security Council should encompass opportunity for participation in its decisions, transparency in its work, a constructive relationship with the General Assembly and the limited scope and use of the veto power.

On the issue of expansion, my country wishes to reiterate the recommendation it made to the General Assembly last November with regard to the membership of the Security Council, especially its non-permanent membership. We strongly favour an equitable and wider representation of non-permanent members, by which regions and subregions would adopt a rotation system, including a prohibition on immediate re-election.

I further submit that in the same way that the Caribbean forms a special subregion of the Latin American Group, the South Pacific region comprising 14 independent island States, eight of which are members of the United Nations, and Australia and New Zealand, should become a special subregion, ensuring continuous membership from our region.

These changes are prerequisites for a dynamic United Nations with credibility in the next millennium.

Now more than ever, our international community needs a system of preventive diplomacy that can respond promptly, positively and peacefully to potential conflicts and threats of genocide. My country continues to call for a special United Nations division or unit to undertake preventive diplomacy in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. The division should have the capacity to receive, collate, analyze and interpret intelligence information and reports, with a view to early detection of potential conflicts and early reaction to minimize, contain and resolve such conflicts in collaboration with the relevant Member States. May I reiterate that in such a division, adequate representation of skills and expertise from small States must be mandatory, for the division must not become a device or a creature of the powerful to impose their will on their own terms.

Speaking as the head of Government of a small island developing country, I totally support the principle of capacity to pay as a fundamental criterion and a firm benchmark on which the contribution of member countries to the United Nations should be assessed. My country therefore fully supports the recommendation of the Committee on Contributions that the scale of assessments for all Member States whose share of adjusted national income is below the current floor rate of 0.01 per cent should be assessed at their actual share of adjusted income. We also support the recommended minimum assessment rate of 0.001 per cent. We further urge that the ceiling should not be lowered any further because a reduction will negate the effect of reducing the recommended minimum floor rate.

My delegation supports the establishment of an international criminal court. Recent crimes against humanity, including genocide, have made it incumbent on the international community to take stern action against those who perpetrate such heinous acts. It is our sincere hope that the current efforts by the international community will be crowned with success and that come next year we shall be in a position to adopt a treaty establishing the international criminal court.

My country strongly emphasizes that the protection and security of small States should remain a central concern of the United Nations. Increasingly, elected Governments and the sovereignty and security of their States are threatened by transnational networks of crime, narcotics, money-laundering and terrorism. These scourges are expanding, and international cooperation and action are essential to counter them.

The Middle East continues to be a cauldron aboil with conflict, tension, violence and early death, the latter sadly reaching tragic proportions since last year's session of the General Assembly. We call upon all parties involved to engage in genuine negotiations towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. We call upon the international community, too, to contribute towards a just and lasting peace.

Last year, I commended both the People's Republic of China and Taiwan for their efforts toward reconciling their differences. I wish to renew my plea to them to work towards unity. We in Fiji enjoy excellent relations with both of them, though we adhere firmly to our One China policy. We in the Pacific continue to enjoy their generosity and their concern for the welfare of the people of the South Pacific. Both the People's Republic of China and Taiwan enjoy our friendship and trust. Fiji and the other 15 member countries of the South Pacific Forum welcome their participation in the annual post-Forum dialogue and consultation with each of them. It is our fervent wish that they will, together, find a solution for their common future.

Likewise, I urge South and North Korea to negotiate a solution that will bring lasting peace and unity to the people of Korea.

Fiji is an oceanic State. As in many island countries, our progress and development depend as much on our land territory as on the sea around us. We are, therefore, concerned that the seas are utilized in a manner that is environmentally sound and that the development of marine resources is orderly and sustainable so that they can serve the present and future generations. We insist on this approach at the national level and strongly support similar efforts at regional and global levels.

In the past decade, our region has adopted a number of treaties and declarations that address the issue of better management of oceans. More recently, following a decision of the heads of Governments of the South Pacific Forum, the region has taken the initiative to negotiate with distant-water fishing States the establishment of a regional fisheries management organization in order to give effect to the provisions of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Agreement relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. This is an important initiative which is designed to promote sustainable use of the region's valuable fish resources to the benefit of both the coastal States and distant-water fishing nations. We look forward to a successful outcome to these negotiations.

As Fiji was the first State to ratify the Convention on the Law of the Sea, in 1982, I feel gratified that, thanks to the efforts of many, including my own country, in resolving the outstanding problems, the Convention today enjoys universal support and near universal participation.

All States benefit from the stability and certainty that has been achieved in the new regime of the Law of the Sea. By defining the jurisdiction of States in marine areas, and by setting out the rights and duties of States, the Convention represents an important contribution to international peace and security.

The institutions established under the Convention, namely the International Seabed Authority and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, and the work being done with respect to the oceans in the United Nations itself, require the support of the international community if the achievements of the Convention are to be consolidated and its promise of benefits to the peoples of the world is to be realized.

Last year, I lent my strong support to an early adoption of the draft United Nations declaration of the rights of indigenous peoples. I renew my call here.

We are informed in the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report 1997* about the bleak future for indigenous people in almost all societies where they are to be found. It is a great tragedy indeed

that indigenous people have seen their values and customs destroyed by incoming population. They face discrimination in employment and disparities in education and they fare worse in the non-income dimensions of poverty.

The observation of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, the programme of activities associated with it and the efforts of the international community to prepare a draft United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, will mean little or nothing if the indigenous people remain a disadvantaged people in our world. The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations, however meaningful, is a mere drop in the ocean of what is required to really facilitate the development of the indigenous people. The World Bank programme to assist indigenous people is too limited in scope and application. The Member States of the United Nations and the international community should do more. The survival of the indigenous people is at stake.

My own country is the home of two indigenous groups, Fijians and Rotumans, but it is also the home of others who came into our country more recently. These newcomers represent nearly half the population of my country. A major challenge for us has been to accommodate the interests and aspirations of these citizens and to reconcile them with the sensibilities, perceptions and pre-eminent status of our indigenous people. We are ensuring peaceful co-existence and cooperation with security and respect for the fundamental rights of all our citizens.

It gives me great pleasure to address briefly recent developments in my own country, Fiji, before this Assembly. Our delegation has kept the Assembly up to date with political developments in our country, in particular our efforts to formulate a new Constitution that is acceptable to all the ethnic communities in the country. Our current Constitution, the 1990 Constitution, was promulgated to secure adequate representation in Parliament for the indigenous people in order to guarantee, protect and enhance their future in their country. That Constitution was reviewed by a Commission last year. Following the submission of the report of the commission, a Parliamentary Select Committee comprising representatives of all the political parties in our Parliament gave due consideration to the report and reached a consensus to amend the 1990 Constitution. The changes were written into the Constitution Amendment Bill of 1997 which was unanimously approved by the House of Representatives and the Senate and signed into law by our President on 25 July 1997. The amended Constitution comes into effect on 27 July 1998.

I do not intend to provide all of the details of the new Constitution, except to say that it contains an entrenched Bill of Rights guaranteeing and protecting the equal rights and fundamental freedoms of all individuals and groups, irrespective of race, religion, gender or economic status. In addition to an independent judiciary, citizens will also have recourse to an ombudsman and a human rights commission in the protection of their basic rights. The Constitution continues to enshrine the full right of self-determination of the indigenous Fijian and Rotuman people, including their right to maintain a separate system of administration to safeguard their interests and welfare.

A unique feature of the Constitution is the inclusion of a Compact which recognizes certain principles, including the following: the preservation of the ownership of land, including the ownership of indigenous Fijian land according to Fijian custom; the right of all persons to practice their religion freely and to retain their language, culture and tradition; and a commitment by all political parties and their leaders to cooperate in the formation of a broadly based Government to ensure that the interests of all communities in Fiji's multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society are taken fully into account.

Indeed, an innovative feature of our new Constitution is the provision for the formation of a multi-party Government. This is to allow for the representation in Cabinet of all political parties that secure seats in Parliament through general elections. We have no doubt — in fact, we are very confident — that with the commitment, goodwill and cooperation of all, this pioneering approach of bringing all communities together in national decision-making, in government and in Parliament, is the best way of consolidating and promoting enduring peace, unity and progress in our little country of Fiji. From our ethnic and cultural diversity, we are determined to build a strong nation with the full participation of all citizens and communities in it.

We are the world. We who are gathered here represent the Governments and peoples of the world. We have it in our power to facilitate economic development and sustained economic growth that include the full and equal participation of the developing countries of the world. Let us make it an international imperative.

Today I call on all of us to rededicate ourselves anew to our commitment to the United Nations. Upon the high principles of mutual love, justice and care on which

it was established, let us together make our world a better place in which to live.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister with Special Responsibility for the Constitution Review and Minister for Regional Development and Multi-Ethnic Affairs of the Republic of Fiji for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Major-General Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka, Prime Minister, Minister with Special Responsibility for the Constitution Review and Minister for Regional Development and Multi-Ethnic Affairs of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is His Excellency the Honourable Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania. He will also speak on behalf of the Group of 77.

Mr. Kikwete (United Republic of Tanzania): Please permit me, Sir, at the outset, to offer my sincere congratulations to you on your election to the Presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. In the same vein, our congratulations are directed to the members of the Bureau on their election. I wish to assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of this heavy responsibility entrusted to you.

I would also like to express my thanks to Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia for the able manner in which he discharged his responsibilities during his Presidency of the last session. At this juncture, I would like to pay a special tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan for his deserved election as Secretary-General of the United Nations and for the able manner in which he is carrying out his responsibilities. Looking at the agenda of this meeting, it is an historic meeting of the General Assembly and you, Sir, will be remembered for many years to come. Personally, I feel proud and privileged to be associated with this meeting.

Last year, here in New York, members of the Group of 77 and China elected my country, Tanzania, to the chairmanship of the Group. The last nine months or so in that post have been a very exciting and challenging experience for me and my colleagues at our Mission to the United Nations and for the entire Government of the United Republic of Tanzania. We have been involved in several meetings, debates and negotiations on behalf of the Group. I am glad to say that, despite some setbacks, notable success and progress have been made in all our endeavours. All this was made possible through the cooperation, support and, above all, teamwork of all members of the Group. We thank all members for their support.

(Mr. Elaraby (Egypt), Vice-President, took the Chair.)

Two years ago, world leaders met here to celebrate 50 years of the existence of the United Nations. Besides taking stock of the progress made and the lessons learned, the Heads of State or Government endeavoured to chart the institutional framework and operational parameters that could enhance the Organization's relevance and effectiveness in a changed international environment. In this context, apart from the Organization's traditional roles of maintaining international peace and security and providing humanitarian assistance, it was also found essential to place development cooperation issues at the centre of United Nations activities. The United Nations itself needed to undertake appropriate reform measures so that it would be better able to deal with the challenges of the new global economy.

To facilitate the reform process in the socio-economic field, developing countries participated actively and effectively in work on the Agenda for Development to ensure the successful conclusion of the negotiations of this important process. These negotiations were completed in June 1997, and I should like to commend the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on this issue for its good work.

Building on the outcome of recent United Nations conferences and other relevant agreements, the Agenda for Development underscores that sustained economic growth is essential to the economic and social development of all countries, in particular developing countries. While acknowledging the importance of national policies and measures in the development process, the Agenda for Development calls for action towards a dynamic and enabling international economic environment, including such aspects as an open, rule-based, equitable, secure, non-discriminatory, transparent and predictable multilateral trading system and the promotion of investment and the transfer of technology and knowledge. Additionally, the Agenda calls for enhanced international cooperation in the mobilization and provision of financial resources for development. It also underscores the need for an effective, equitable, development-oriented and durable solution to the external

debt and debt-servicing problems of the developing countries.

Many developing countries are not able to benefit from the twin processes of the liberalization and the globalization of the world economy. These processes benefit some countries while causing instability and marginalization in others, particularly in developing countries. The least-developed countries face the greatest risk of further marginalization. This is why they continue to demand that such uneven trends be addressed, and that the World Trade Organization and other related international organizations adopt specific and concrete measures to mitigate the adverse effects arising from the implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements. These measures must include long-term financial and technical support, the transfer of technology, and the improvement of the trade performance of the developing countries. It is also necessary to ensure full and effective participation of the developing countries in the international economic decision-making processes.

Concerning financial flows, it is imperative to reverse the overall decline in official development assistance and to achieve the agreed target of 0.7 per cent by the turn of the century. We appeal to developed countries to reaffirm their commitments to meet this target. Other sources of concessional external financial assistance should also be strengthened to enable them without conditionalities to increase resources for disbursement in support of the developing countries.

In addition to official development assistance and multilateral assistance, the growth in foreign direct investment in developing countries is of particular importance. However, foreign direct investment portfolio flows are going to very few developing countries, those which are already growing fast; very little, or none, is going to the least-developed countries. For example, Africa has received only a small proportion of the total net private flows, despite extensive reforms that continue to be undertaken. The challenge to the international community in this respect is to ensure that adequate capital and investment flows also reach the least-developed countries so as to accelerate their pace of development. This could be done through, *inter alia*, the improvement of economic and social infrastructure in the least-developed countries.

External indebtedness is one of the major obstacles to the development efforts of many developing countries. It is acknowledged that even with sound economic policies and with full appreciation of the debt-rescheduling arrangements in place, developing countries continue to face an unbearable debt-servicing burden. There is hence an urgent need for adopting durable solutions to external debt and debt-servicing problems, particularly those of the heavily indebted poor countries. More also needs to be done in terms of debt stock cancellation and forgiveness. We appreciate recent initiatives to reduce debts, both those within the Naples terms of the Paris Club, and those within the multilateral framework, such as the heavily indebted poor countries initiative of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. However, the criteria for eligibility should be more flexible to enable more countries to benefit from these arrangements. As it is now, it is almost a nightmare for a country to qualify in terms of conditionalities involved and the time it takes before reaping the first benefits after qualifying. It is like being so near yet so far.

The debate on development is closely interlinked with that on the environment. In June this year, a special session of the Assembly was held to review and appraise the implementation of Agenda 21 five years on. It is regrettable that the special session came out with no concrete agreement or commitments on the cross-cutting issues of financial resources and technology transfer. For while it was possible to agree on follow-up action on some of the sectoral issues such as forests, energy, climate change, desertification, fresh water and others, lack of concrete agreement on issues related to financial resources and technology transfer militates against effective realization of the little that was agreed upon.

In his statement at the special session on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, my President, His Excellency Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, emphasized that all countries should rededicate themselves to the Rio Declaration in order to achieve the goals of sustained economic growth and sustainable development. He further stressed the need for creating a more conducive international economic environment, to enable developing countries to gain access to new and additional resources and technology on concessional and grant terms. I wish to reiterate that call today.

Other major international conferences and world summits held since 1990 will also come up for review in the near future. It is our hope that a new spirit of international partnership in resolving the various socio-economic problems facing, particularly, developing countries will emerge and that international support for the implementation of the various programmes of these

conferences will continue to be provided by the international community.

In recent years, South-South cooperation has evolved into an important modality for addressing the development needs of developing countries. We are convinced that South-South cooperation provides a sound basis for promoting economic growth and increasing technical capacities for acceleration of development in the developing countries. The Group of 77 and China pledge to intensify existing cooperation and solidarity among its members with a view to sharing development experiences and solving some of the development problems facing them.

I agree with the Secretary-General that reform of the United Nations is not an event but a process. General Assembly resolution 50/227 and the Secretary-General's proposals provide a basis for the discussion of United Nations reforms. However, we strongly feel that emphasis should be placed on the overall policy thrust and mission of the Organization geared towards the strengthening of its economic role.

Furthermore, institutions that deal with economic issues, such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the relevant Economic and Social Council bodies and regional commissions, should remain. They should also be strengthened to ensure that the development concerns of developing countries are taken fully into account.

As for the reform of the Security Council, my country stands for more democratization and equity in this crucial organ of the United Nations. We stand for the expansion of its membership in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, with the additional members in the permanent category getting veto power. The expansion in both categories should include not only Japan and Germany, but also equitable representation of the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

All reforms must be conducive to realizing the broad purposes and principles of the Charter and to improving the efficiency of the United Nations in all areas. They must also contribute to a more positive and effective United Nations role in promoting world peace and development, and meet the aspirations of developing countries. I am confident that we will be able to achieve a broad consensus as long as all of us engage in deliberations in good faith and with a readiness to consider all legitimate concerns.

Tanzania appreciates the changes that have taken place in the area of disarmament. The threat of nuclear war may not at present manifest itself in the ideological confrontation of the past, but it has not gone away or receded. It is still with us, and we should guard against any complacency that we are any safer today. Nations still possess nuclear warheads, and new generations of these weapons are being manufactured. The total elimination of these weapons must continue to be the central purpose of our disarmament agenda.

While nuclear weapons still pose a potentially grave threat to international peace and security, conventional ones have had a devastating effect, particularly in areas of conflict. Among these are anti-personnel landmines, which maim and kill the innocent, even long after war has ended. The effects of these weapons are evident all over the world, with their most violent manifestation in countries such as Angola, Cambodia, Mozambique and Bosnia. Tanzania has supported, and will continue to support, a worldwide ban of these weapons through the framework of the Ottawa process and looks forward to becoming an effective party to the instrument just concluded in Oslo, Norway. At the same time, we hope that the elimination of anti-personnel landmines will not be seen as an end in itself, but as part of the overall objective of eliminating other weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction.

As the United Nations grapples with the challenges of peace and development, it is still faced with many political problems which need urgent resolution if humanity is to prosper. From Latin America and the Caribbean to Europe, from Asia to the Middle East and Africa, the United Nations is faced with the arduous task of promoting peace, democracy and good governance as the enduring pillars of development.

We congratulate the people of Liberia for having conducted a successful democratic election, which, we hope, has ushered in a new era of peace in that country. Now, as they seek to regain their footing and begin the arduous task of national reconciliation, healing and economic reconstruction, they will need the support of the international community.

At a time when Liberia is emerging from destruction and suffering, we are deeply concerned that Sierra Leone is sinking deeper into chaos at the expense of peace, development and democracy for that country. The Government of Tanzania has associated itself fully with the efforts made within the framework of the

Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to restore democracy and constitutional rule in Sierra Leone. Even at this late hour, we continue to hope that the Sierra Leonean military will realize the folly of their misadventure and agree to return their country to constitutional rule. In the meantime, the continuing efforts of the West African region, and Africa in general, merit expanded support so as to put an end to the destructive cycle of military coups in Sierra Leone.

In Angola, we continue to be concerned by the manoeuvres of UNITA to stall the process of implementation of the Lusaka accords. Our concern is given added urgency by the steady degeneration of the situation in the country and the likelihood of a return to open hostilities and war, with all the destruction and suffering that portends for the people of that country. We urge UNITA to abandon its obstructionist policies and abide by the Lusaka peace accords. We hope the United Nations will remain engaged in Angola.

The situation in the Great Lakes region remains precarious. The consequences of decades of misrule in some countries of the region have been horrendous in terms of suffering, war, death and lost opportunities to harness its great development potential. We regret that the situation in Burundi shows no sign of improvement. The military authorities have persisted in frustrating the efforts of the region within the framework of the Arusha initiative, under the chairmanship of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, to facilitate the process of political dialogue.

Tanzania and the other countries of the region are persisting in their efforts because we believe there is no alternative to dialogue but war and more suffering for innocent civilians. The region has no other interest in Burundi but to help. At the regional level, meetings were held in Arusha on 4 September, and the leaders reiterated their commitment to the search for peace in Burundi and called upon the military authorities there to abandon the course of confrontation and seek dialogue and political accommodation with all elements in Burundi.

The region has been categorical in restating that the Burundi authorities should be under no illusion that they can bury their heads in the sand or wish the problem away. They simply have to face reality and dutifully rise to the occasion. Certainly the region and the international community cannot leave them alone and allow them to lead the country into self-destruction and war, with all the attendant problems that creates for Burundi and its neighbours. I wish to appeal to the international community to continue assisting the region so that our goal of restarting the dialogue for peace in the country is achieved.

In Rwanda, fortunately, the situation is steadily stabilizing, particularly after the return of most of its citizens, who had been coerced into a drifting life in exile as refugees. Yet the difficulties which face that country are enormous. The process of recovery from the immense moral, physical and spiritual effects of the 1994 genocide will be painful and slow. As Rwanda struggles to come to terms with the genocide, reconcile with itself and continue on the path of national healing and renewal, it needs our solidarity and support.

With President Laurent Kabila's assumption of the leadership of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the process of returning to democratic rule has begun, albeit slowly. We realize that it will not be an easy or swift process, given the political rigidity and the policies of political exclusion to which that country was subjected for decades. We appreciate the enormity of the task of putting the country back on its feet, restoring Government institutions and setting out towards democratic recovery. Given this background, what the Government and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo need most is solidarity, understanding and material support from the international community.

The political problems of the Great Lakes have precipitated a grave humanitarian challenge as millions of people have been forced into a life of exile as refugees. This has placed an enormous burden on the countries of the region, including my own, which has had to shoulder it without commensurate resources. We appreciate the great work done by United Nations agencies and many humanitarian non-governmental organizations in terms of providing the much-needed assistance to the refugees. Indeed, without this support, the life of the refugees would have been most unbearable. Yet even with this much-appreciated assistance, the burden left to refugee-receiving States has been enormous. The economic, social, environmental and security consequences of hosting the refugees will have long-lasting effects from which these countries will continue to suffer even after the repatriation of the refugees has been completed. This raises the fundamental issue of assisting the asylum countries, not only to cope with the immediate task of meeting the needs of the refugees, but also with the long-term effects of hosting them. This aspect needs addressing.

Somalia may no longer be on our television screens or worthy of the news headlines, but it is still a problem which must not be forgotten. The country is still fragmented, and fighting among the factions in conflict is not yet over. There is a chance that through the Sodere initiative there may be some positive developments. The United Nations needs to continue associating itself closely with the efforts being expended by the Intergovernmental Authority for Drought and Development and the Organization of African Unity aimed at bringing durable peace to Somalia.

In Western Sahara, too, we are concerned by the apparent freeze in the implementation of the settlement plan. As we reiterate our solidarity with the Frente POLISARIO, we express the hope that the initiatives of the representative of the Secretary-General, in the person of the former United States Secretary of State James Baker, will bear fruit and remove the prevailing political difficulties in the implementation of the settlement plan.

Tanzania continues to follow closely the developments in the Middle East which now threaten peace in the area. In this regard, Tanzania reiterates its solidarity with the Palestinian people and calls upon the Palestinian and the Israeli authorities to persist in their efforts to consolidate dialogue and move forward in elaborating permanent arrangements for peace. We still believe that, ultimately, enduring peace in the region lies in the return of all the occupied Arab land and in the full enjoyment by the Palestinian people of its inalienable right to self-determination and independence, including the establishment of a homeland for themselves within internationally recognized boundaries.

In conclusion, as we move into the new millennium, the world is still a place largely besieged by poverty and underdevelopment, conflict and war. The giant leaps of science and technology which have enabled humankind to explore outer space and to shrink the world into a global village have so far not been adequately and evenly channelled into meeting the compelling needs of the greater part humanity. The world will transit into the next millennium divided between those who are prosperous and at peace and those living in abject poverty and at war. Therefore, it must be the overriding objective of the United Nations to ensure that this disparity is overcome. The challenge that we must all face is to strengthen this Organization by unconditionally supporting it fully, politically and financially to enable it to serve humanity better.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile, His Excellency Mr. José Miguel Insulza.

Mr. Insulza (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is with particular pleasure that I extend to you, Mr. President, my sincerest congratulations, and those of my Government, on your election as President of the General Assembly. Your election will ensure that the business of the General Assembly will be conducted skilfully, impartially and very efficiently at this important moment for the General Assembly, when it will have to make decisions that may be vital to the future of our Organization.

The General Assembly session that we are now beginning is a particularly important one in that its purpose is to ensure that in the future multilateral activity will be assured of validity, effectiveness and credibility. With the United Nations having completed more than 50 years of existence, we need new ways to view the world, without forgetting the many achievements made and the valuable experience gained both from successes and from failures.

This is an appropriate time for us to renew our commitment to multilateralism as the guiding principle of international relations and the essential tool to resolve crises and problems that are beyond the ability of any State, however important or powerful it may be, to resolve on its own.

This is particularly important in the face of a growing unilateralism that has recently emerged as a feature of the international scene. The new international reality makes it essential for States to act together so as to confront energetically and resolutely the problems of the environment, organized crime, arms control, human rights, democratization, poverty, unemployment, social fragmentation and many other issues.

Chile has consistently contributed to the Organization and, to the limits of its ability to do so, will continue to lend its strong support to the great work of the United Nations in all its forums.

I wish to speak first of the issue of the Security Council and its reform process. I stressed before the General Assembly last year the importance of greater involvement by Member States in the decisions of the Security Council in order to strengthen its legitimacy and

give it the necessary political backing for the actions it undertakes.

We reiterate once again the desirability of revising the composition of the Security Council and its working methods. In this connection, we appreciate the arduous work conducted by the Working Group on this issue, which has served to clarify the various positions and to allow a proper appraisal of this enormously complex subject.

I wish especially to pay tribute to the outgoing President of the General Assembly, Mr. Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for his keen sense of responsibility and his courage in taking the initiative to make specific proposals on these matters in order to ease the difficulties encountered within the Working Group and make it possible to analyse and discuss them in specific terms.

My Government considers that any future composition of the Council must combine the requirements of its effectiveness with the need for an equitable representation of the developing countries that properly reflects the increase in the number of Members in the past 50 years.

Where these fundamental issues are concerned, Chile supports and endorses the content of the Declaration on the strengthening of the United Nations and the reform of the Security Council issued by the Heads of State or Government at the eleventh summit of the Rio Group in Asunción, Paraguay, on 24 August of this year.

In that Declaration we expressed the great importance we attach to the process of expanding and reforming the Security Council, which must result in a broad general agreement that will make it possible to correct the imbalances in its current composition, improve the decision-making mechanisms, make the conduct of its work more transparent and represent with greater legitimacy all States Members of the Organization.

With regard to the total number of members of the Security Council, we believe that a membership of up to 25 would not impair its effectiveness, provided that the expansion met the requirements of responding properly to the increase in United Nations Member States since the last reform of the Charter and the undeniably growing importance of developing countries.

Chile shares in the broad base of agreement on allowing the entry of Germany and Japan as permanent members of the Security Council. Nevertheless, there is also a conviction that this can take place only in the context of suitable regional representation, including other permanent members from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

We support a process of regional consultation and consensus to fill these seats. This, however, does not exclude a possible role for the General Assembly in case there is an absence of regional agreement. In this connection, the Assembly will have to analyse carefully the proposals that have been put forward regarding rotation. These are undoubtedly attractive since they include a larger number of countries, but they could impair the effectiveness of the Council and increase tensions between permanent and non-permanent members.

As far as the Latin American and Caribbean region is concerned, its fundamental responsibility is to fill its seats through a process that gives its members legal validity and political legitimacy. In this process, consideration must be given to all the possibilities that will allow for appropriate regional representation. Chile is prepared to accept any formula that reflects this. Serious consideration must be given to the possibility that only one of its members will occupy the permanent seat allocated to the region.

The question of the veto will also have to be discussed in greater depth, taking into account many factors, such as legal ones relating to Charter obligations and the evolution of modern international law, and political ones, such as the evolution of the international situation, which are today very different from those prevailing at the time the United Nations came into being. The outgoing President of the General Assembly has made some very interesting proposals in this regard, which need to be carefully considered by Member States.

Chile is concluding this year, with a sense of satisfaction, its participation in the Security Council after an absence of more than 30 years. Our decision to participate was motivated by the need to assume our international responsibilities, and we did so in the conviction that we could make a contribution.

As a preliminary conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the rich contribution of the non-permanent members of the Council provides genuine balance and enables the Council to renew itself over time. Our experience has been a rewarding one, and we have sought to focus our contribution, beyond our natural interest in issues relating to the Latin American region, on a number

of areas in which welcome progress has been made, to which Chile has made an effective contribution.

We welcome the important progress the Council has made regarding its responsibility in the humanitarian sphere, which has necessarily become a major aspect of the maintenance of international peace and security. This is the foundation of the presidential statement issued by the Council on the protection of humanitarian workers. The strengthening of this aspect of the Council's work was one of the main issues in which Chile participated. Motivated by our concern about this matter, we proposed a mechanism that establishes the modalities by which the Council communicates with the humanitarian agencies working in the field.

Similarly, Chile has been particularly concerned that countries that have experienced severe conflicts should not be abandoned by the system once conflict ends. We have therefore insisted on the need for a United Nations presence in the field when peace-building gives way to overall reconstruction and development activities.

With respect to sanctions, it has been demonstrated that, where authoritarian Governments are concerned, broad sanction regimes merely penalize the population without bringing about political change. We have noted the progress made by the Council in devising sanctions, as in the case of resolution 1072 (1996) on the situation in Burundi and the one recently adopted on UNITA in Angola, which are indeed capable of yielding the desired results without harming innocent populations.

Lastly, Chile has attached special importance to African affairs while a member of the Security Council. We believed it important to assist the Council in taking decisions on the problems that region is facing at this historic moment when African countries are assuming their own responsibilities for regional problems, as has been apparent in the Organization of African Unity initiative in the Arusha process and the activities of the Economic Community of West African States, among others.

We are aware that the reform process is not confined to the Security Council. The Secretary-General has told us clearly and lucidly that we are facing the most extensive and farthest-reaching reforms in the 52 years of this Organization's history. Accordingly, we welcome his comprehensive report of last July, entitled, "Renewing the United Nations: A programme for reform". We agree with his proposals aimed at transforming the leadership and management structure of the United Nations so as to enable it to act with greater unity of purpose, coherence and agility in tackling the problems.

We wish to convey to the Secretary-General and his colleagues our gratitude for the report, which the General Assembly will have to analyse in depth, and Chile will contribute to the debate with interest and dedication and in an open spirit of consensus.

In this connection, we agree with the Secretary-General's statement that the major source of institutional weakness in the United Nations is the fact that over the course of the past half century certain of its organizational features have tended to become fragmented, duplicated and rigid, resulting in their ineffectiveness in some areas and superfluity in others. As Chile sees it, the main obstacle to the reform process has been the fear of change that exists in the Organization, which has paralysed the process since it began here in the General Assembly four years ago. The time has come for all of us, the Secretariat and Member States alike, to show proudly our collective creativity, courage and realistic inventiveness. The period of bureaucratization in the United Nations must give way to the era of creation.

Only through flexible and efficient management will we be able to give new impetus to the Organization and provide it with the proper tools for the true modernization the international community demands. Reform is not intrinsically an exercise in cutting costs or reducing staff. Its aim is to ensure a real and growing increase in the political effectiveness of the United Nations, from the Security Council and the way it deals with and resolves present-day conflicts in today's world to the Economic and Social Council and the development agencies.

Many of the problems facing the Organization result from the fact that Member States have been remiss in responding to the need to adapt intergovernmental machinery to the new requirements of the international situation. This is perhaps one of the main aspects of the reform process we have embarked upon.

Accordingly, it is essential to proceed further with the reorientation and restructuring of the Economic and Social Council in order to coordinate both the agencies and its subsidiary bodies so that it may engage in executive interaction with the functions of the General Assembly. In that way, it can regain its leadership position as a flexible and efficient organ and contribute effectively to answering the challenges on the economic and social agenda of the Organization.

Given this mandate of the Economic and Social Council, its future relationship with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund will be extremely important. In this connection, the establishment of a substantive secretariat of the Economic and Social Council seems to us an interesting proposal.

Furthermore, the reform process should leave room for the progressive regionalization that is taking place within the United Nations system. In the review of the regional commissions to be carried out by the Economic and Social Council, there is a need to find mechanisms which, without affecting the regional mandates of each commission, can contribute to the definition and regional implementation of the major agreements and consensuses reached by the major conferences sponsored by the United Nations system over the past decade.

We are following with interest the proposal to give to the Resident Coordinator of the Secretary-General authority over all United Nations bodies in the field. This new integrated approach, in which the funds and programmes will retain their autonomy, will contribute to the necessary cohesion and reduce the natural tendency towards divergence between the multidisciplinary agencies represented, thereby strengthening their activities.

It also seems to us essential to evaluate the subsidiary bodies in greater depth, using as the main criteria their relevance and effectiveness, and to take the appropriate decisions. Accordingly, we are concerned by the recommendation to merge the Commissions on Narcotic Drugs and on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, since that would run the risk of limiting treatment of the problem of narcotic drugs merely to its criminal dimension, losing sight, in the process, of elements that are an inherent part of the drug issue, such as education and prevention. At the same time, the reform process must assign special importance to measures and mechanisms designed to accelerate economic and social development, especially in Africa, by supporting domestic efforts at economic restructuring, diversification of raw materials and increased food security being carried out by the countries of the region.

We welcome the proposals designed to strengthen the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, both institutionally and substantively, since they seem to us to be of great importance for the future development of the Organization. The protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, together with democracy and equitable growth, are the three pillars of present-day international society. As the Secretary-General himself has stated, they constitute an essential component of international peace and security. Any measure that contributes to strengthening the ability of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to take action will receive the firm support of the Chilean delegation.

Similarly, we strongly support the initiatives by the Secretary-General with regard to the proposals for interaction between civil society and private enterprise, which have become major actors at both the national and international levels. The time has come for civil society, including the business community, to participate in the United Nations at a level that reflects the contribution that it has been making for some time.

A series of measures have been recommended to us that are designed to make more flexible the procedures for deliberations in the General Assembly, to reduce the length of meetings, apply a thematic approach to topical issues, overcome delays and enable us to concentrate on the most essential matters. While technically these proposals appear to relate more to formal than to substantive aspects, we know that in fact they will not be simple or merely procedural decisions. In reality, their aim is to promote the capacity of this Organization to build consensus, so as to arrive at concise decisions in the shortest possible time.

On financial matters, we endorse the proposal for results-based budgeting, with few institutional mechanisms having a major strategic impact. This seems to us an innovation will have far-reaching consequences for the Organization. We also support the idea of reallocating savings to economic and social activities through the establishment of a development account.

We have focused our statement on the great task of reform, which is difficult, complex and full of potential as well as of problems. We are determined to find the solutions that the United Nations requires if it is to discharge all its mandates and satisfy the demands and aspirations of an international community that is anxious to place in the Organization great hopes for the future. We are determined not to let this opportunity to restructure and renew the United Nations pass us by. The full cooperation of the Chilean delegation can be counted on in this effort.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations A/52/PV.6

General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

Official Records

6th plenary meeting
Monday, 22 September 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of Nicaragua, His Excellency Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lacayo (*interpretation from Spanish*): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

It is a principle of today's world that political legitimacy and democracy constitute the most civilized form of government. The United Nations must reflect this increasingly universal principle by supporting the efforts being made by the Governments and peoples of the world that are struggling to democratize their countries.

After a decade of totalitarianism and struggles of resistance, the Nicaraguan people have chosen democracy as our system of government. Proof of this is the elections that were successfully conducted in 1990 and in 1996, when I was elected President of Nicaragua and undertook to build a state of law and to lead my country along the path of democracy, reconciliation with justice and the institutionalization of the State.

We know that this is a difficult challenge. The Government over which I preside has made the commitment to achieve economic and social development that will make it possible to meet the basic needs of the population and to guarantee sustainable growth in the medium and long term.

We are aware of the need to promote a national commitment to democracy. To that end we have initiated an open, sincere national dialogue with different sectors of society, including the political parties, civil society and non-governmental organizations, so that together we can find the key elements for building a democratic political culture.

My Government is pleased to support the hemisphere's efforts, as coordinator of item 18 on the agenda of the Summit of the Americas, "Strengthening of the role of women in society". The Summit meeting wished to emphasize that the exclusion of women from the tasks and benefits of development is a big obstacle to the attainment of growth and democracy.

The entire world is in a process of change, and we believe that the United Nations system cannot remain on the sidelines. Nicaragua congratulates the Secretary-

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General on his dynamic vision, and we thank him for his report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" (A/51/950).

Nicaragua has benefited from many programmes of the system and its agencies, programmes which have had an impact on its economy, health, social well-being, education and employment, to name just a few areas, and ultimately on democratic development.

My Government considers the time has come for Member States to approve a greater leadership role for the Secretary-General. We are glad that the Secretary-General attaches special importance to peace processes and the need to improve the system's capacity to combat drug trafficking and terrorism. We support programmes to reduce arms and enhance human rights, as well as to strengthen the ability to respond in the best possible way to emergency situations. Likewise, my Government considers that development programmes and programmes for strengthening democratic systems must not be affected. Our democracies still have enemies. A rapid response capacity is essential today.

The Security Council's present structure and its Members' prerogatives belong to a bygone era. The days of the cold war and a bipolar world are a thing of the past, and the number of States making up the international community has increased substantially since 1965, the date of the last enlargement of the Council. It is therefore clear that its present structure is neither equitable nor democratic.

The days of armed conflict in the Central American region are over. In this very forum, all the nations of the world have declared Central America to be a region of peace, democracy and development. Fortunately, we Central Americans are daily getting closer to real and effective integration.

We are aware of the urgent need to bring about profound change in our institutional system in such a way as to respect our sovereignty, and laws, and the different characteristics of each nation, while allowing us to face effectively the challenges of the next century and to blend successfully into global flows of trade and investment.

Deeply resolved, the Central American Presidents have agreed to initiate a process of gradually establishing the Central American union. To that effect, we announced in Managua on 2 September the decision to designate a high-level group to prepare the bases and the conditions for constituting the union. We ask the international community to support this process unreservedly, for we consider it invaluable for the strengthening of our democracy and the well-being of our peoples.

We Central Americans do not want the destructive consequences of war experienced in the 1980s to continue into the twenty-first century. We still face humanitarian and economic problems because of the damage caused by the presence of landmines and other explosive devices, which have caused irreparable losses to the civilian population and the national economy.

The United Nations has seen profound changes in world events, including great transformations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. We are pleased to see how democracy, the ideas of civil society and respect for fundamental human rights are becoming predominant characteristics of today's world.

I therefore note with great regret that the 21.5 million people who live in the Republic of China are not represented in this great Assembly. What is going on, Mr. President? Everyone knows that the Republic of China signed the United Nations Charter in 1945. Domestically, it maintains government structures guaranteeing its people the exercise of their fundamental rights and freedoms. In no international forum dealing with this subject has the Government of the Republic of China been described as a violator of inalienable rights. The countries of South-East Asia have seen how the economy and democratic development of the Republic of China have been significant factors in the region's stability. The international community can attest to the fact that the Republic of China bases its attitude on the principles that govern the United Nations Charter, particularly in its peace-loving nature and its capacity to make a positive response to the needs of the international community.

Bearing these facts in mind, I appeal to the Assembly to amend resolution 2758 (XXVI), which excludes the Republic of China from the United Nations. We ought to maintain the principle of universality through the equal participation of all the States of the world. The Government of Nicaragua considers that the Republic of China should enjoy equal opportunity to participate in the United Nations and its specialized agencies. We cannot forget the right of those who freely chose to live in and to build the Republic of China and who want their country to be recognized with full and effective participation at the heart of this Organization.

We have a broad programme of work, which will contribute not only to overcoming the obstacles that peoples and Governments face in achieving their goal of maintaining and implementing fundamental values of development, social well-being and justice, but also to preparing for our entry into the twenty-first century with a renewed and strengthened world Organization that can assist Governments to attain the well-being of their peoples.

On behalf of the Nicaraguan people, I ask God to bless the United Nations and all the peoples of the world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Nicaragua for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Leonid D. Kuchma, President of Ukraine

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Ukraine.

Mr. Leonid D. Kuchma, President of Ukraine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Leonid D. Kuchma, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kuchma (*spoke in Ukrainian; English text furnished by the delegation*): Mr. President, it is with pride that I congratulate you, a representative of Ukraine, on your election to the international community's highest political post. I am confident that you will use to the full your rich political experience and internationally recognized diplomatic skills, as well as your profound knowledge of the United Nations system, to which you have devoted more than 20 years of your life, to the benefit of mankind.

I wish also to address words of gratitude to representatives of all United Nations Member States for their support of the candidature of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine for the honourable and responsible position of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We interpret that support as a manifestation of a high level of confidence in Ukraine's foreign policy, its peaceful initiatives and its commitment to the ideals of the United Nations and to the objective of reviving and strengthening the Organization. We regard it also as recognition of Ukraine's contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, to the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, to the promotion of the noble principles of democracy in international life and of respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Allow me also to pay a tribute to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, Mr. Razali Ismail, who made a notable contribution to the Organization's progress along the path of reform.

The recent history of the United Nations and the history of the development of independent Ukraine have much in common. The first common feature is that both my State and the United Nations are now experiencing the complicated process of internal reform. Profound, comprehensive change is proving to be an extremely difficult matter. But the choice is final and irreversible: Ukraine has become a democratic State with a policy aimed at ensuring the needs and rights of its citizens, and at establishing a civil society. There is every reason to conclude that during our six years of independence we have laid the foundation of further State-building.

As early as next year we will certainly experience gradual economic growth and the forging of a socially oriented market economy in Ukraine. All the conditions now exist for this to become reality, both internal — as illustrated by the political stability in Ukraine — and external.

Ukraine has consistently conducted, and is determined to continue, a policy aimed at strengthening security and stability throughout the world. I would recall that last year we removed the last nuclear warhead from our territory, thus transforming a nuclear-weapon State to a non-nuclear-weapon State for the first time in history. Ukraine thus demonstrated its good will, proved that genuine nuclear disarmament is possible, and made a substantive contribution to the achievement of the ideal of a nuclear-weapon-free world in the twenty-first century.

No less significant is my country's contribution to radical positive changes in the Central and Eastern European region, creating favourable conditions for a new, more stable and more secure geopolitical situation throughout the continent.

Important steps in that direction included the basic political treaties that Ukraine has signed with the Russian Federation and with Romania, and the agreement with the Republic of Belarus on State borders, the first of the kind to be signed in the history of the newly independent States.

The signing by the Presidents of Ukraine and of Poland of the joint statement on reconciliation and unity was of exceptional significance for the improvement of the situation in Central and Eastern Europe. We view that document as exemplifying a balanced and unbiased approach to the evaluation of complex pages of history, and as a deliverance from the burden of the past for the sake of the development of mutually beneficial cooperation now and in the future.

The resolution of the problem of the division of the Black Sea fleet has contributed to enhanced security in the Black Sea region and throughout Europe.

Among the most recent of important events, I wish to note the signing at Madrid of the Charter on Special Partnership between Ukraine and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The establishment of a special partnership with the alliance has tangibly strengthened confidence in Europe and is now one of the important elements in the establishment of a new system of European security.

It is generally acknowledged that the future of the European security architecture as an important element of global security should be based on principles of comprehensiveness, indivisibility and partnership, and, in the long run, on collective rather than unilateral action. It is in that context that Ukraine is developing active cooperation with European and transatlantic security structures.

An important place in Ukraine's foreign policy priorities belongs to developing mutually beneficial relations with the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Ukraine is also devoting special attention to the Movement of Non-aligned Countries, which is one of the influential factors in contemporary international relations. Our observer status in that movement testifies to the fact that Ukraine is today a non-bloc country.

All of this can be summarized in a single conclusion: thanks to Ukraine's persistent efforts, its borders are now peaceful and it is open to partnership with neighbouring countries. Our multifaceted foreign policy has promoted the image of Ukraine as a reliable and predictable partner.

We have been guided by, and still abide by, the well-known principle: think globally and act locally. I believe that this approach — based, incidentally, on fundamental provisions of the United Nations Charter — will lay the foundation for future relationships among all members of the world community.

The events on the European continent since the end of the Cold War have persuasively shown that threats to security on the continent will henceforth emanate not from confrontation between military-political blocs, but rather from regional and local conflicts. A good reminder of this is the series of tragic events of recent years in the Balkans, in the Transdniestr region, in the Caucasus and elsewhere. At the same time, discussions on the future of European security have so far focused mainly on the issues of NATO and European Union enlargement, the role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and so forth. It is not my intention to minimize the importance of these issues, but we are certain that all-European stability will be unattainable without strengthening regional security and establishing mutually beneficial and good-neighbourly relations between Ukraine and other nations.

It is to that end that European countries — especially those of Central and Eastern Europe, among them Ukraine — should exert the best of their efforts. It was for this very reason that we proposed to hold in Ukraine the 1999 summit meeting of the Baltic and Black Sea States.

By the will of destiny, we are living at the threshold of a new millennium, which has coincided with a turning point in the development of mankind. The United Nations — a unique instrument for the maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security — should be well prepared for the changes ahead and should be ready to respond to the challenges of today and of the twenty-first century.

It is difficult to overestimate the positive changes in the world in which the United Nations has played a key role. It is true that the Organization has not been able completely to cure all social evils. However, it is equally true that the United Nations has always sent a timely signal regarding the emergence of new hazards and has united the world community to address urgent global problems.

The substantive outcome of these joint efforts relates in particular to environmental protection in its global

dimension: prohibiting chemical and bacteriological weapons and reducing nuclear weapons, as well as formulating a new concept and practice of peacekeeping; ensuring human rights; and codifying international law on non-renewable resources.

At the same time, we must admit that the United Nations has not always been able adequately to respond to a number of the problems it has faced. This makes it necessary further to improve its structure and internal organization and to increase the effectiveness of its work.

Unfortunately, we must take note of the fact that no institution other than the United Nations so clearly confirms the validity of Parkinson's law, which states that the expansion of bureaucracy has no limits. For that reason, I believe that today no one has any doubts that changes in the United Nations are urgent and are objectively required. I hope that the current session will make a substantive contribution to this important cause and that we will have all due reason to refer to it as "the session of reforms".

The well-known seventeenth-century Ukrainian philosopher and educator Hryhoriy Skovoroda once said that

> "You do your best work and save yourself when you firmly embark upon the road of common sense".

This, in our view, is the path that the process of United Nations reform should also take. Ukraine is actively supporting measures aimed at bringing the structure and tasks of the Organization in line with new realities.

It is from this perspective that we are now considering a package of proposals by the Secretary-General aimed at a wide-scale reorganization of the United Nations structure and its programme activities. While these proposals may not fully coincide with the interests of some countries or regions, they have been elaborated on the basis of compromise and, in fact, constitute the first real attempt to stop marking time in the process of reforming the Organization. Therefore we have to be pragmatic and attempt to avoid drowning this issue in endless discussions and appeals, as has happened repeatedly in the past.

We should begin without delay concrete work on the proposals of the Secretary-General, without dividing the package into separate components. Furthermore, we must keep in mind that the implementation of these proposals, following their final approval and endorsement by the General Assembly, will be only the initial stage in the process of the radical transformation of the United Nations, which will have to embrace its most important components, primarily the Security Council and the budgetary and financial system.

In this context, equitable geographical representation in the Security Council and the increase of its membership take on special importance. It would not be a mistake to say that this problem is considered by the majority of Member States as a priority issue and that its resolution, to a great extent, will determine the results and the success of the reform of the Organization. In general, Ukraine shares this point of view. But we also believe that the overall process of the renewal and rebuilding both of the United Nations structure and of its activities should not be held hostage to the solving of one issue, albeit a very important one.

The negotiations that took place within the framework of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly were, in our opinion, useful and productive. The positions of many Member States have shifted, moving towards achieving compromise. We can realistically expect participants in the negotiations to reach the general accord that is necessary for the adoption of a decision, as required by the relevant resolution of the General Assembly. I should like to call on Member States to exert maximum efforts to reach a consensus decision. The most important thing now is to transcend nationally focused approaches by taking into account the common interests of the international community.

Concerning the enlargement of the Security Council, I believe that the solution to the problem should be based on the following general principles.

First, all the regional groups, including the Group of Eastern European States, should enlarge their representation in the Security Council; secondly, the enlargement should not negatively affect the efficiency of the work of the Security Council; and thirdly, the process of enlargement should not be given a strict time limit, although a decision on this issue should preferably be taken in the near future.

The elaboration and practical implementation of an overall concept of peacekeeping activities is an extremely pressing issue that can be settled only within the framework of the United Nations. Two years ago, at the

commemorative meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization, I proposed gradually to re-orient United Nations peacekeeping activities towards preventive diplomacy. The experience of Blue Helmets operations in hot spots around the globe in recent years has further convinced us of the need to strengthen the preventive component.

In this context, we consider the system of United Nations standby agreements to be promising. Ukraine, striving to make a real contribution to the strengthening of this mechanism, recently signed the relevant memorandum of understanding with the United Nations.

Improving the efficiency of peacekeeping operations is not an abstract notion for our country. Let us recall that the first Ukrainian peacekeeping unit was deployed five years ago to the United Nations peacekeeping force in the former Yugoslavia. Since then Ukraine has participated in more than 10 United Nations peacekeeping operations. In addition, our military contingent has taken part in the operations of the multinational stabilization force in Bosnia.

From this lofty rostrum, I reaffirm Ukraine's readiness to participate directly in a settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, to join the activities of the group of countries known as Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia, and to dispatch its personnel to the United Nations peacekeeping mission in that country.

Ukraine will also continue its efforts to bring about a final settlement of the conflict in the Transdniestr, acting together with Russia and with the participation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as a guarantor of the special status of the Transdniestr as an integral part of the Republic of Moldova.

The nineteenth special session of the General Assembly held earlier this year, which was devoted to reviewing progress in the implementation of Agenda 21, was a major international event. I know that many countries have assessed its results rather critically since, in their opinion, the session did not fully meet expectations. But it did confirm the adherence of the overwhelming majority of countries to the principles of sustainable development declared in Rio, and it also provided the world community with a number of constructive proposals with regard to a further strengthening of global partnership in the field of environment protection.

We must all remember the equal right of present and future generations to a viable living environment. Our shared obligation to them is to join our efforts for the sake of the survival and development of human civilization. That was the essence of Ukraine's proposal concerning the elaboration in future of an international legal document that would serve as a reliable legal basis for safe and sustainable development worldwide.

For Ukraine, environmental problems are not just abstract theory. The Chernobyl nuclear-power plant accident has been a real national tragedy for my country. Every year up to 15 per cent of the State budget is spent on compensating for the losses it has caused and on ensuring social benefits for the people affected.

Ukraine made a political commitment to decommission the Chernobyl nuclear power plant by the end of the millennium and has made continuous efforts to fulfil it. We expect other countries to meet their commitments in this regard.

At the same time, the problem of Chernobyl cannot be limited to the decommissioning of the nuclear power plant. This accident unleashed a series of problems that are global in nature and could scarcely be overcome alone by even the most developed nations. Chernobyl today is not the exclusive problem of Ukraine. In paying tribute to the United Nations efforts aimed at eliminating the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, I wish to emphasize that an overall solution to this global problem is simply impossible without large-scale international assistance.

At present, the United Nations is going through a difficult but crucial moment of renewal. The same can be said about Ukraine, which is more than ever before conscious of its dependence on the world order and relies on the support of the international community. That is why the question of what form the world order will assume in the future — to which this session is expected to provide an answer — is of particular and, without exaggeration, fateful importance to us.

The future of the world order, of the United Nations and of every country, is our common future. Thus, while deciding today on the fate of the United Nations, we should be aware that we are also determining our own destiny.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank His Excellency, the President of Ukraine, for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Leonid D. Kuchma, President of Ukraine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Sharif (Pakistan): May I begin with a verse from the Holy Koran:

(*spoke in Arabic*)

"To each is a goal
To which God turns him;
Then strive together
Towards all that is good.
Wheresoever ye are,
God will bring you
Together. For God
Hath power over all things." (*The Holy Koran, II:148*)

(*spoke in English*)

I convey to you, Sir, and to the nations assembled here the greetings of our people in this golden jubilee year of Pakistan's independence.

Soon after achieving its independence, Pakistan was admitted to the United Nations. The half-century of Pakistan's and the United Nations existence has been eventful. Through years of upheavals and dislocations, through turbulence and brief moments of tranquillity, we now stand at the threshold of a new century and a new millennium. The theme of world affairs has been transformed.

During these 50 years, Pakistan has demonstrated its commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations in word and deed. We have fulfilled our obligations to this Organization. We have adhered to its resolutions. We have contributed politically and materially to its collective endeavour to build peace and promote prosperity. We are especially proud of our contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations worldwide.

I wish to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his determination and vision in carrying out his responsibilities. I would like to assure him that Pakistan will, as always, support all initiatives for the realization of the objectives set out in the United Nations Charter.

We are fortunate to have a person of your stature and experience, Sir, to guide this session of the General Assembly. The items on its agenda are important and consequential, particularly the crucial issue of United Nations reform. I wish you every success.

Doctrines of confrontation and containment are no longer valid. The new idea of our times is that of global partnership between the North and the South, the East and the West. The United Nations must forge this global compact. The creed of our era is peace and development. This is what the United Nations must focus on as it strives to bring about organizational reform. We support the process of reform in the United Nations. In pursuing this objective, we must bear in mind our successes and failures of the past 50 years. The centrality and sanctity of the Charter must be preserved as we move towards reconfiguring the United Nations.

The United Nations today stands at the brink of bankruptcy. The reform cannot and must not be victim to the narrow strategic, political and administrative preferences of a chosen few as a means of regaining the Organization's solvency. True reform has to take into account the interests of all. The United Nations is a universal Organization of 185 States and their 6 billion people. The purpose of its creation was to serve the interests of all humankind. This should be the guiding principle for its reform.

There is undoubtedly need for reform. The map of the world has been redrawn. Many new States have emerged since 1945, when the United Nations was established. The reform that is envisaged must be designed to facilitate the objectives for which the United

Nations was created: to promote global peace, security, cooperation and prosperity.

More than mere lip service must be done to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, such as the sovereign equality of all its Members and equal rights for all nations, large or small. The emergence of five veto-wielding permanent members of the Security Council was the consequence of an unfortunate afterthought. It was completely incompatible with the democratic ethos of the United Nations Charter. The result was the impotence and inaction of the United Nations during the cold war years. The legitimization and enlargement of the privileged club of veto powers would deal a crippling body blow to the ability of the United Nations to carry out its responsibilities.

The contours of a multipolar world are gradually emerging. In the event of a resumption of great-Power rivalries, the proliferation of the veto will once again freeze the Security Council into irrelevance.

It is ironical that the countries which practice democracy at home and advocate it abroad should want to create a new aristocracy of States. Any decision on Security Council reform that is not backed by the consensus of all the Member States of the United Nations will erode the credibility and undermine the legitimacy of the Council and of the United Nations.

The Charter of the United Nations rejects hegemony. International peace and security have to be built through cooperative efforts. This entails the resolution of disputes through negotiations, mediation and arbitration. It means removing the causes of war and conflict. It involves the promotion of global prosperity and development. It necessitates adherence to the resolutions of the United Nations, particularly those of the Security Council.

The enforcement of peace should be undertaken only in response to actual acts of aggression or breaches. It must be pursued collectively and fairly, not imposed arbitrarily by the strong over the weak. Nowhere does the Charter provide for pre-emptive penalties against States for arms proliferation or presumed threats to peace.

A central weakness of the United Nations is that some members are expected to pay their contributions to its budget fully, unconditionally and on time, while others delay payments. The principle of capacity-to-pay-is fair; it should not be unilaterally discarded. At the same time, alternate sources of funding have to be explored in order to make the United Nations immune to pressure, unhealthy influence and hostile onslaughts.

The intention of the Charter was to place the United Nations at the apex of the system of international organizations that were created at the end of the Second World War. The Charter rightly perceived political, security, economic, social, cultural and humanitarian issues to be interrelated. It therefore called for coordinated approaches and policies to address those issues. To achieve this, it is essential for the United Nations to become the central link for the entire family of international organizations, without exception. Only then will the world community be able to address successfully the host of diverse, complex and interrelated problems it confronts.

On its fiftieth anniversary, Pakistan — like the United Nations — has embarked upon the course of reform and renewal. In this endeavour, we are inspired by the eternal ideals of Islam in which justice, equity and human rights, especially those of women and minorities, are the central pillars. Islam draws no distinction between creeds. It accepts all religions. Thus, the Holy Koran declares:

(spoke in Arabic)

"Say ye: 'We believe
In God, and the revelation
Given to us, and to Abraham,
Ismā'īl, Isaac, Jacob,
And the Tribes, and that given
To Moses and Jesus, and that given
To (all) Prophets from their Lord:
We make no difference
Between one and another of them:
And we bow to God (in Islam).'" (The Holy Koran, II:136)

(spoke in English)

My Government is vigorously addressing the political, economic and social problems we inherited from the past. We have taken measures to consolidate parliamentary democracy through constitutional means; to restore financial equilibrium through austerity and structural adjustments while enhancing business incentives and economic liberalization; to combat corruption, drugs and terrorism — which is often sponsored from abroad — through effective law enforcement and speedy and fair justice.

These policies have yielded dividends. We look to the future with hope and optimism. Our economy is open and dynamic. Domestic and foreign investment is growing rapidly. Our people are imaginative, skilful and hard-working. We have demonstrated that we can master the most advanced technologies. We can now deter external aggression. With confidence in ourselves, we seek friendship and cooperation with all our neighbours on the basis of equality.

Pakistan strives for peace and stability in its region. We seek an early end to the conflict in Afghanistan; a just and fair settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations; an end to the wasteful arms race in South Asia; and the development of the immense economic and commercial potential of South and Central Asia.

We have the courage to strive for peace and the wisdom to know that it is essential for development. South Asia, with one-fifth of the world's population, remains mired in poverty and deprivation. I call upon India to join us in liberating our peoples from the dreadful grip of poverty. This can only be achieved by removing the causes of conflict and hostility.

The conflict that has ravaged Afghanistan for almost two decades must be brought to an end. No country in the world has suffered more than Pakistan as a consequence of the turmoil. We therefore have a vital interest in the restoration of durable peace and stability in Afghanistan. Towards this end we have been in contact with all Afghan groups in support of the efforts of the United Nations aimed at promoting an intra-Afghan peace process.

We favour no faction in Afghanistan. We have recognized the present authorities in Kabul, as we did the previous entities that controlled the capital. We have encouraged moderation and dialogue so that a stable, multi-ethnic Government can emerge. We request the Secretary-General of the United Nations to take specific initiatives for the early restoration of peace and the preservation of the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Afghanistan.

My Government has also taken initiatives to resume the stalled dialogue with India. We had agreed last June on a comprehensive agenda and a mechanism to deal with all issues, including the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir, in a sustained manner. We have, unfortunately, not yet succeeded in setting up the agreed mechanism to launch substantive negotiations on all the issues on the agenda of our dialogue. We hope that India will reciprocate our sincerity of purpose in substantively addressing all the issues and carrying forward this process of dialogue to a positive outcome.

The resolutions of the Security Council define Kashmir as a disputed territory whose accession to either Pakistan or India is to be determined through a plebiscite supervised by the United Nations. Under the Simla Agreement of 1972, India agreed to a final settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute with Pakistan.

The existence of the Kashmir dispute cannot be denied. The right of self-determination is sacrosanct. It has repeatedly been affirmed by the United Nations. The people of Kashmir are justified in asking why this pledge by the international community has not been honoured as yet. The Security Council cannot be selective in the implementation of its resolutions.

The Kashmiri people have risen against Indian occupation. Their resolute struggle for the restitution of their fundamental rights belies the claim that Kashmir is an integral part of India.

I am sad to say that the repression of the people of Jammu and Kashmir continues unabated. More than 600,000 Indian troops in Kashmir continue to brutalize the people. Custodial killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrests and summary executions are daily occurrences. Thousands of Kashmiri civilians have been killed, while 32,000 languish in detention centres. I learned just this morning of the shelling of Arin in Kashmir by the Indian forces yesterday, a mortar attack in which 11 persons were killed and 12 injured. Six children and three women were among the dead. This is an altogether familiar occurrence in occupied Kashmir.

If India is serious in its allegation that the conflict in Kashmir is being stoked by interference from Pakistan it should have no hesitation in allowing the United Nations observers present in Kashmir to verify this claim. We hope that the United Nations will increase the number of these observers and ask India to allow their stationing on its side of the line of control as well.

The international community has a responsibility to bring about a just settlement of the Kashmir dispute. The pledge of self-determination given to the people of Jammu and Kashmir has to be redeemed. On our part, we welcome the offers made by the Secretary-General, the United States and others to help in resolving the Kashmir dispute.

My Government will persevere in the dialogue with India for the sake of our people and the peoples of South Asia. We hope that India can be persuaded to take some steps to create a climate conducive to the success of the talks. These could include, first, a halt in its campaign of repression against the people of Kashmir; secondly, the withdrawal of at least those Indian troops which are engaged in internal repression in Kashmir; and, finally, the evolution of a mechanism to take into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people, as stipulated by the United Nations, for a final settlement.

It is imperative now to negotiate arrangements to strengthen peace and security between India and Pakistan. Since 1974 Pakistan has pursued its proposal for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia. On the other hand, India has taken successive steps to escalate its nuclear and missile capabilities. What does India mean when it repeatedly asserts that its nuclear option is "open"? Does this imply that, like chemical weapons, India has already manufactured nuclear weapons? In the absence of any assurances to the contrary, Pakistan will have to assume the worst.

India's nuclear-capable Prithvi missile is being serially produced. These missiles specifically target Pakistan. They have been moved adjacent to our borders. This creates a hair-trigger security environment. The development and possible deployment of the medium-range Agni missile and India's planned acquisition of theatre missile-defence systems will further aggravate this tense security environment. It will evoke the natural response from Pakistan to safeguard and augment its security and deterrence capability. India must be persuaded to reverse its missile programme.

To preserve peace and stability in South Asia and beyond, we propose that Pakistan and India should reach agreement for mutual and equal restraint in the nuclear and ballistic fields. In this context, we are deeply concerned about India's acquisition of missiles and its plans for the acquisition of anti-missile systems. We also propose a similar arrangement for mutual and equitable restraint on conventional weapons which ensures equal security to both Pakistan and India.

We are prepared to conclude and strengthen confidence- building measures. As a first step, we could agree on a set of principles to guide future bilateral arms-control arrangements.

We believe that a just settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute and progress on the issues of peace and security will usher in an era of amity and progress in South Asia. To facilitate the realization of this objective, I offer today, from this rostrum, to open negotiations on a treaty of non-aggression between Pakistan and India.

There are many areas in which we can cooperate for mutual benefit. Trade liberalization can take place on an equitable basis. Significant foreign investment can be drawn to the region.

In the expectation that the Pakistan-India dialogue will have made a heartening advance by next year, my Government intends to host a regional economic summit in 1998, which could help to open new vistas for economic progress and prosperity for our region.

All this and much more can be achieved if India joins us in pursuing our current dialogue to its successful culmination. We have demonstrated our sincerity of purpose. It is for India to reciprocate.

Located at the nexus of Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East, Pakistan can contribute to and gain from the economic growth and interaction between these dynamic regions. The United Nations and its family of organizations have a crucial role to play in generating prosperity and restoring peace with justice to these vital regions of the world.

Today, I wish to renew Pakistan's commitment to the United Nations, to its purposes and principles and to its vision of a world where genuine peace reigns and prosperity is universal. The vision of the founding fathers of the United Nations must continue to serve as a beacon guiding us across the uncharted waters of the coming millennium. The Charter of the United Nations and its timeless principles provide us the anchor to weather turmoil and turbulence. Let us renew our determination to defend and preserve this anchor of hope and faith. Let not political expediencies infringe or erode the fundamentals of international cooperation enshrined in the Charter.

We in Pakistan, who had dared to dream of freedom 50 years ago, are resolved to defend freedom — freedom from war, oppression, injustice, poverty and deprivation. Let us all move together towards realizing the vision of the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, His Excellency Mr. Bjørn Tore Godal.

Mr. Godal (Norway): First, I join other speakers in congratulating my Ukrainian colleague upon his election to his high office.

Last week in Oslo, almost 100 countries agreed to a Convention text for a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. Who would have imagined, only a year ago, such a remarkable achievement in such a short time? Thanks to the tireless efforts and model cooperation of Governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society, we have reached this milestone event. I would like to extend a special tribute to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the International Committee of the Red Cross. They have been a driving force in our efforts to get rid of the scourge that landmines represent in the lives of men, women and children in conflict areas around the world.

At the beginning of December we will meet in Ottawa for the signing of the Convention. I appeal to all countries engaged in this process to ratify the Convention. To those who have not yet joined us, I say: "Please do so as soon as possible". Landmines cannot be allowed to terrorize, maim or kill more innocent civilians. The United Nations and its Members have an important role to play and responsibility for bringing success to the Ottawa process. I appreciate the support of the Secretary-General and welcome the fact that he will be the depositary of the treaty. We all have a strong moral obligation to increase our efforts to reduce the suffering and prevent new casualties caused by landmines. Norway intends to provide $100 million over a five-year period for mine clearance and assistance to victims.

The spread of landmines, small arms and weapons of mass destruction is unfortunately only one of the many interlinked global challenges illustrating that the world now, more than ever, needs the United Nations as a well-functioning global Organization. At the threshold of the third millennium, it is unacceptable that poverty and pollution still dominate the daily lives of billions of people all over the world; it is unacceptable that hostilities and hatred still create deadly new conflicts and humanitarian disasters, between and within States on all continents; and it is unacceptable that basic human and individual rights are still widely violated through injustice by Governments and the negligence of the international community.

Mr. Young (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Only the United Nations can tackle these universal and interdependent problems in a comprehensive and integrated manner. But the world has surely undergone radical changes since 1945, and so has the nature of the tasks confronting us. Hence, the United Nations also needs to change in order to do better what the Member States want it to do. I was therefore very pleased by the letter that Mr. Kofi Annan sent to all of our Governments last month. In clear and concise terms, the Secretary-General set out the elements of what is without doubt the most comprehensive reform package in the history of the United Nations.

Let me state clearly that Norway warmly welcomes and fully supports the Secretary-General's programme for reform and renewal of the United Nations. Together with the other Nordic countries, we have given our strong political backing to his reform proposals. We will work actively with other Member States to ensure that the General Assembly endorses the reform package this autumn. We want the reform plans to be implemented as soon as possible. Norway urgently wants a stronger and more efficient United Nations. Without such reform, we will have an Organization less able to promote development, peace and progress.

Norway is, as many know, one of the main contributors to the United Nations system. We are one of the group of countries that fulfil the aim of allocating more than 0.7 per cent of our gross national product to development. One out of every 100 Norwegians has participated in peacekeeping operations around the world. In terms of money, resources and personnel, our voluntary assistance to humanitarian relief activities, is, I am proud to say, second to none. But we want to make sure that our contribution is put to good use. We want to see it utilized by the United Nations to improve the lives of people where the needs are the greatest. That is why we support the Secretary-General's reform proposals.

First of all, the reforms will ensure that more resources are allocated more efficiently for development.

The Secretary-General's excellent proposal to use administrative savings for a "development dividend" is but one element in the process. We encourage him to continue further on the course that he has taken. United Nations activities targeting sustainable development, poverty, population, education, the promotion of the role of women in development and the implementation of the results of the Beijing Conference must be strengthened and integrated at the headquarters and field levels. Health should be among the main priorities. Increased international efforts are needed to assist developing countries in improving their national health policies and to combat emerging and re-emerging diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS. Member States must follow up by fulfilling their obligations to increase their transfers of aid to the developing countries and peoples that need it the most. Hopefully, this will also have the effect of creating the confidence needed to bring us forward in the Rio process, towards renewed environmental commitments which can pave the way for a successful meeting in Kyoto later this year.

Secondly, the reforms will strengthen the ability of the United Nations to manage conflicts. Too often, the United Nations has shown a lack of capacity to act rapidly in the face of emerging crises. Therefore, we believe it is high time to establish a rapid-deployment mission headquarters for peacekeeping and other operations. Norway has offered to provide funding for personnel for this headquarters. Furthermore, we encourage other Member States to contribute to the Trust Fund for Preventive Action, which was established this year. We are pleased to note that the Fund has already facilitated the work of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General in Central Africa. We want to cooperate closely on conflict resolution with our friends and partners in Africa, including through our training programmes for peacekeeping tasks in that region.

Thirdly, the reforms will extend the capacity of the United Nations in the human rights field. Norway welcomes the proposals to strengthen the human rights secretariat and the excellent choice of Mary Robinson as High Commissioner for Human Rights. We pledge to work closely with her to ensure that the international community increases its focus on human rights violations. Human rights concerns must become an integral part of all core areas of the Organization's work, including at Headquarters in New York.

We must follow up reform of the Security Council. Our position is, I believe, well known: the Council must be made more representative and should better reflect changes in political and economic realities. We want new permanent seats for Germany and Japan and for the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. At the same time, a limited number of new non-permanent seats should be added.

We need financial reform and changes to the scale of assessments. Some countries have experienced high and sustained economic growth, but still resist reforms which would better reflect their increased capacity to pay. Other countries feel that they are paying too much. We agree that the time has come to show flexibility in the discussions on lowering the ceiling on the scale of assessments to the United Nations budgets, as part of an overall solution. It cannot be justified that some countries unilaterally pay less than their legally binding share, or nothing at all. Non-payment is unacceptable. How can those of us who always make a point of paying in full and on time, without conditions, expect our citizens and taxpayers to continue financing free riders?

We need better integration and coordination within the United Nations system and between the United Nations, regional organizations, Governments, civil society and non-governmental actors. For Norway, this is not least important in the area of humanitarian assistance. We welcome the proposal to enhance the capacity of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to deal more effectively with complex emergencies.

In Bosnia we are engaged in peace-building under very difficult conditions. Men and women are serving a wide range of different organizations: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the United Nations civilian police, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and humanitarian non-governmental organizations. Without the excellent coordination and cooperation that has evolved between the High Representative, the United Nations Special Representative, the Stabilization Force Commander, the OSCE Head of Mission and others, the peace-implementation process would have been in dire straits indeed.

Nationalist leaders in Bosnia are still inciting hatred. Refugees are being denied their right to return to their homes. Our personnel are being threatened. War criminals are still at large. But despite the failure of local leaders to fulfil their obligations, the recently held elections show that the international community has given this country hope for the future. We will stay the course and remain engaged in Bosnia until peace is consolidated. We will insist that wanted war criminals be brought to justice. The

convening of a United Nations conference to establish a permanent international criminal court in 1998 must be given priority.

Norway remains committed to the Middle East peace process. While we will continue to work actively with other donor countries to ensure the availability of funding, we are extremely concerned by the current deadlock. The parties must realize that there is no alternative to the peace process and to the fulfilment of the spirit and the letter of the Oslo accords. Further credible efforts to combat terrorism must be undertaken. The current settlements policy is not conducive to the peace process. We must redouble our efforts to bring the parties back into dialogue about the remaining issues.

We must not forget the success stories of United Nations conflict resolution. Just since last year, for example, the decades-long civil war in Guatemala has ended peacefully. We have had the pleasure of working with the United Nations and others, like the Group of Friends for Guatemala, in seeing through the ceasefire agreement signed in Oslo and the other peace accords. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca for their courage and determination to see the peace process succeed.

Finally, our experience in Guatemala and other conflict areas corroborates the importance that the Secretary-General attaches to the close interaction between the civil society, Governments and the United Nations. We must make use of the dedication, resources and commitment to peace and progress that exist among citizens, in non-governmental organizations and in the private sector. Through the active involvement and support of civil society, we can build a stronger and more effective world Organization for the next century.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of South Africa, His Excellency Mr. Alfred Nzo.

Mr. Nzo (South Africa): South Africa welcomes your election, Sir, as the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We congratulate you having experienced at first hand your skills and role as Vice-Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid. We also express our appreciation to Ambassador Razali Ismail for his tireless work as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

May I also congratulate His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan on his election as the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations. The zeal that the Secretary-General has displayed in addressing, through his reform proposals, the difficulties confronting this Organization is impressive. The Secretary-General's reform programme is one that in many respects complements the intergovernmental process regarding the revitalization of the Organization.

The General Assembly is well aware of the need to reform the United Nations. The process of reform should produce a revitalized Organization capable of addressing humanity's vital issues of peace and security. Central to the process of modernization of the United Nations is the restructuring of the Security Council to redress existing imbalances and transform it into a transparent organ accountable to the broader membership of the Organization.

South Africa fully supports the Non-Aligned Movement's position that there should be no partial or selective expansion in the membership of the Security Council to the detriment of developing countries.

The reaffirmation at the Organization of African Unity's Harare Summit of Africa's claim to two permanent and five non-permanent seats, with the same powers and prerogatives enjoyed by the current permanent members in an expanded Security Council, is consistent with the Charter principle of equitable geographical representation. If the Security Council is to fulfil the role of custodian of international peace and security envisaged for it in the Charter, it must be perceived to be fully legitimate by States and peoples.

South Africa is therefore of the view that a limited expansion of only five or six new Security Council seats will not fulfil the crucial requirement of transforming the Security Council into a representative organ.

Central to the Security Council reform process is the question of the veto, which has been a focal point in our deliberations for the last three and a half years. Indeed, the democratization of the Council hinges on the veto being either eliminated or extended to the new permanent members. Accordingly, the issue of the status of the veto must of necessity form an integral part of a comprehensive reform package. Permanent membership without the veto represents merely a symbolic gesture to new permanent members which would serve to perpetuate

an unjust and discriminatory practice and accord them an inferior status.

I wish to recall that last year in the General Assembly, I registered South Africa's disappointment with the slow pace of the debate relating to the reform of the Security Council. The time has come for us all to display the necessary political will and determination in order to reach agreement on a comprehensive set of measures which will lead to the creation of a Security Council which is transparent, democratic, accountable and thus credible and legitimate.

The fifty-first session of the General Assembly also witnessed the conclusion of the work of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. Its notable recommendations regarding the strengthening of the role and functions of the General Assembly attest to the importance which we as Member States attach to this body as the supreme political organ of the Organization.

It is, however, disappointing that on the issue relating to the election of a Secretary-General, the Working Group was unable to reach consensus on the recommendation to the permanent members of the Security Council to refrain from using the veto to block the outcome of the election.

As a result of Africa's painful past experiences under colonial domination, as well as the abhorrent system of apartheid, my Government is committed to the final eradication of colonialism and fully supports the effective implementation of the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. We believe, therefore, that the Committee of 24 should continue its work in order to determine the interests of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories regarding their future political status. We call on the administering Powers to lend their full cooperation to the Committee.

South Africa is concerned that intra-State conflicts in Africa continue to pose a threat to the continent's stability. These conflicts lead to loss of life and economic hardships and are a major stumbling block on the road towards peace and development. It is a matter of concern that conflicts in Africa persist despite the commendable efforts of the Organization of African Unity and of African leaders in conflict resolution.

We therefore urge parties to the conflict in the Republic of the Congo to observe the ceasefire agreement and to make all efforts to ensure that the interim measures for the holding of national elections in 1998 are instituted. Similarly, we condemn the coup in Sierra Leone and implore Member States of the United Nations to support Africa's efforts to restore constitutional order by refraining from recognizing or giving support in any form to the military Government.

South Africa is committed to the promotion of peace in Angola, which we believe will contribute to the consolidation and extension of stability to the whole of our region of southern Africa. We are therefore concerned about the failure of UNITA to fulfil its obligations under the Lusaka Protocol. In this regard, my Government welcomes the decision of the Security Council to impose the punitive measures envisaged in its resolution 1127 (1997), as a means of ensuring UNITA's compliance.

South Africa has followed the unfolding developments in the Middle East with cautious optimism. South Africa, and indeed the international community, welcomed the signing of the Oslo accord by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Israeli Government and applauded it as representing a positive step towards the full realization of the long-awaited comprehensive and just settlement in the region. But the decision of the Government of Israel to construct new Jewish settlements in Jebel Abu Ghneim has given rise to tensions and has generated a crisis situation which has reignited conflict in the region. We all know that this decision is a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and of the relevant resolutions of this body. It is no doubt an attempt to change the legal status of Jerusalem and to pre-empt the final status negotiations.

The inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination is a prerequisite for achieving a durable and comprehensive peace. For peace and stability to prevail, the region requires the unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967.

South Africa welcomes the Secretary-General's latest initiatives currently under way to seek a lasting solution to the question of Cyprus. We urge all parties to make concerted efforts in working with the Secretary-General and his good offices towards an overall comprehensive settlement to this question, which has been on the agenda of the United Nations for more than 30 years.

South Africa attaches great importance to preventive diplomacy as a means of forestalling the possibility of conflict. We commend the report of the Special

Committee on Peacekeeping Operations because it provides us with measures aimed at strengthening the role of the United Nations in peacekeeping. We also welcome the Committee's 1997 report on peacekeeping operations and urge the Committee to address the question of the rapidly deployable mission headquarters and the further development of United Nations standby arrangements.

South Africa believes that progress on disarmament issues will create a world free of war. The end of the cold war heralded a period of progress in disarmament and non-proliferation, as was evidenced by the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. However, the re-emergence of maximalist positions in the disarmament debate retards global disarmament, as demonstrated by the disappointing progress made at the Conference on Disarmament this year. Despite the consensual adoption of a mandate for the negotiation of a fissile-material cut-off treaty, one of the essential elements for complete nuclear disarmament, little progress has been made. Nevertheless, South Africa is encouraged by the large number of States which have committed themselves to the complete eradication of weapons of mass destruction by joining various non-proliferation and disarmament treaties during the past year. Universal adherence to important disarmament treaties will pave the way towards a world free of weapons of mass destruction.

Humanity is faced with the daily threat of harm from the use of conventional weapons. High priority should be placed on strategies and policies intended to prevent the proliferation of conventional weapons and to reduce their flow to conflict areas. The conclusions reached by the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms lay the foundation for future action by the international community.

On 18 September 1997, the Oslo Diplomatic Conference adopted the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The Convention is a clear and total ban on anti-personnel mines and establishes a compelling new international norm against this scourge which has for so long afflicted humanity, especially innocent civilians, mostly women and children. South Africa looks forward to the early entry into force of the Convention and appeals to all States to heed the call of the international community against these inhumane weapons.

South Africa has often expressed grave concern at the involvement of its nationals in mercenary activities, because these activities inhibit the achievement of peaceful solutions to internal conflicts and destabilize regions. Consequently, we have drafted legislation to regulate the rendering of military assistance by private individuals and companies to foreign Governments and agencies.

The South African Government puts a high premium on the promotion and protection of human rights as a cornerstone of its foreign policy. As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the thirtieth of the International Year for Human Rights, we reaffirm our commitment to the preeminent values of basic human dignity, values for which we have fought and for which we must continue to fight. Our peoples deserve no less. In this context, my delegation supports the recommendation to convene a world conference on racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

My Government remains committed to addressing gender inequities. The worst manifestations of these unequal gender relations are the acts of violence committed against women and girls. My Government has pledged itself to preventing and combating this violence by, among other initiatives, aligning its legislation, policies and strategies with international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

South Africa believes in the strengthening of the role of the United Nations in the promotion of international cooperation for economic and social development. To this end, we welcome those measures in the Secretary-General's proposed reform package which seek to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations and to revitalize its role in the context of development.

The adoption of the Agenda for Development by the General Assembly was a milestone in our collective search for a meaningful global partnership for development. That the membership could reach agreement on so complex a matter is testimony to the seriousness with which States view the issue, and to the dynamics of consensus-building in fostering a global partnership. Member States should act to implement the Agenda for Development in a coordinated manner, by creating dynamic structures susceptible of successful delivery.

South Africa remains committed to an action-orientated Agenda for Development which gives priority to international cooperation for development. Partnerships

for development, as envisaged also in the Midrand Ministerial Declaration and Partnership for Growth and Development, should be established to ensure effective delivery of assistance to the developing world.

The problems of abject poverty and social deprivation continue to afflict and haunt many countries, particularly in the developing world. In order to address this scourge, which affects least-developed countries in particular, effective and consistent measures need to be undertaken within the context of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

The issue of external indebtedness continues to frustrate the ability of the least-developed countries to promote economic and social development. It is therefore incumbent upon the international community to address and find a solution to this problem as a matter of urgency.

One year after the conclusion of the mid-term review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, we need to take stock and review progress to see if the requisite resource mobilization levels are anywhere near being met and whether the central development goals are in place. As with the mid-term review of the New Agenda, this would enable the international community to take urgent and practical action on behalf of the African continent to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment.

We in southern Africa, as a region whose potential for development was hamstrung by the repressive policies of apartheid, cannot but seek the promotion of our people through cooperation. It follows therefore that we should be committed to the transformation of our Southern African Development Community into an institution which provides a framework for the promotion of the imperatives of reconstruction and development. This would enhance the degree to which, individually and collectively, the region offers a basis to ensure a better life for all our peoples.

The global partnership for sustainable development will be enhanced through the transfer of essential and environmentally sound technologies to developing States on preferential and concessional terms. The financial resources and mechanisms necessary for the implementation of Agenda 21 are still inadequate. Developed countries should honour their commitment to raise official development assistance flows to the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product. Those few countries which have achieved this objective are commended.

We encourage the promotion and sustainable management of the global environment to ensure a higher quality of life for all. The objective of sustainable development should be the integration of environmental, economic and social policies in order to meet basic human needs and to manage the environment on a sustainable basis.

The disappointing lack of consensus at the special session of the General Assembly on the environment held in June 1997 leaves considerable follow-up action to be undertaken in order to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 21. In this respect, the role and importance of the United Nations Environment Programme as one of the leading United Nations bodies in the field of the environment should be strengthened.

We commend the decision to convene a special session on drugs to deal effectively with the illicit production, sale, demand, trafficking and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. The special session will offer Member States an opportunity to join their efforts to combat drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

South Africa strongly favours the early establishment of a permanent, independent and effective international criminal court. An opportunity now exists to establish the court before the turn of the century. We must therefore redouble our efforts during the forthcoming sessions of the Preparatory Committee to ensure that the diplomatic conference in Rome can complete its work successfully.

It is imperative that all Member States continue fully to support the international criminal tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. To this end, my Government, in collaboration with the Parliamentarians for Global Action, recently hosted an international workshop on securing State cooperation and compliance with the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Its purpose was to review cooperation with the Rwanda Tribunal and encourage the enactment of domestic legislation by Member States, thus ensuring that those accused of acts of genocide are swiftly brought to trial.

My Government welcomes efforts to elaborate a draft convention to define terrorism. It is our belief that acts of terrorism must be clearly distinguished from national liberation struggles in pursuit of the right to self-determination by peoples subjected to foreign or colonial domination.

I should like to take this opportunity to announce to the Assembly that on 20 August 1997, the South African Cabinet approved ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. South Africa, a country with considerable maritime interests, will, for its part, continue to play a meaningful and constructive role in the governance of the world's oceans.

The continuing financial crisis of the Organization is of great concern to my delegation. We fully support the Secretary-General's commitment to ending the long and persistent near bankruptcy of the Organization. It behoves Member States to discharge their Charter obligation by paying their contributions in full, on time and without conditions.

The lofty ideals that brought us together should continue to serve as an inspiration for us to strengthen the authority and capacity of the United Nations as we move into the next millennium.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, His Excellency Mr. Josef Zieleniec.

Mr. Zieleniec (Czech Republic): At the outset, may I congratulate Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko on his election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly and wish him much success in this important and responsible function. I should also like to use this opportunity to thank his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, who, with his typical energetic approach, contributed greatly to the success of the fifty-first session.

The recently concluded fifty-first session of the General Assembly can certainly be described without exaggeration as one of the key periods in the history of the United Nations. The important reform proposals submitted during its course will, if carried out, result in the most fundamental change in the structure and activities of the United Nations since its foundation. We strongly believe that the Organization will emerge from the reform process reinforced and that this process will increase the importance of the United Nations as a global forum that focuses on the serious problems facing our world today, open to all who wish and are willing to take part.

We greatly appreciate the vigour and vision with which the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has committed himself to the reform efforts. We support the measures he has already taken to make the work of the United Nations Secretariat more effective as well as the package of recommendations he submitted to the General Assembly last July. Whether or not these concrete and effective reform steps are really put into effect now depends on the political will of the Member States. The Czech Republic will make every effort to be most cooperative in this respect.

We are glad that the reform efforts of the Secretary-General have met with a favourable response on the part of the Member States. His proposals have been supported also by the 16 Heads of State and Government associated in the Carlsson Group, of which Czech President Václav Havel is also a member. As this Group stated in its declaration of 10 August 1997 on the Secretary-General's reform proposals, the United Nations has a chance to take a step forward, and this chance should not be missed.

As for restructuring the Security Council, the Czech Republic prefers the expansion of both Council-member categories while preserving the Council's effectiveness and flexibility. We continue to support an increase in the number of permanent members to include Germany, Japan and three other countries representing Africa, Asia and Latin America. My country also advocates expansion of the category of non-permanent seats, including one seat for the Group of Eastern European States.

The reform of the Security Council should also result in improving and simplifying the Council's working methods. My country has actively participated in discussions of this question and has submitted a proposal for a broader interpretation of Article 31 of the United Nations Charter. We are pleased that our proposal has been backed by a number of Member States and believe it will become part of the working methods of the reformed Security Council.

It is quite unthinkable to restructure the United Nations without changing its present system of financing. In order to make cost-sharing more equitable it is necessary to change the existing scale of assessments. The new system of contributions to the regular budget and to peacekeeping operations should reflect the real economic capacity of individual Member States. All Member States, without exception, should also duly comply with their financial obligations.

For my country, this year is a year of important events. The invitation extended at the Madrid Summit to three Central European countries, including the Czech Republic, to open talks on accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), is a key and historic

decision which we regard not as a first and last step, but, rather, as the beginning of the process of NATO enlargement. The Czech Republic is convinced that the alliance will in the future invite some other democratic countries. The signing of the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Russian Federation constitutes an important step towards the strengthening of European security.

The Czech Republic has noted with satisfaction that the effort of the European Union to further enhance the integration process achieved concrete results at the Intergovernmental Conference in Amsterdam. We welcomed the European Commission's positive assessment of the Czech Republic as a candidate for European Union membership. We believe that negotiations with the Czech Republic and other candidates for membership can start in the early months of 1998.

One of the basic prerequisites for a country's stability is harmonious relations with its neighbours. This is why we attach great importance to the Czech-German declaration on mutual relations and their future development, signed in Prague in January of this year. By signing this document the two sides confirmed their political will to further intensify all-round bilateral cooperation as an expression of their determination to work jointly on shaping a peaceful future in Europe. In fact, this joint determination and political will is already being transformed into concrete steps in different areas.

We are very sensitive to the political problems of our present world, and, within our capacities, participate in their solution. One of the most complicated issues is undoubtedly the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, and particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We support the peace process based on the Dayton Peace Accords and on the London Programme of Action, and consider them the best possible solution to the protracted conflict. It is beyond dispute that one key prerequisite for the success of the peace process is the just punishment of all war crimes committed during the conflict.

We also focus our attention on the situation in the Middle East, the region currently being visited by President Havel. The peace process is now in a difficult phase, but its role is irreplaceable. We hope, however, that bilateral talks between the State of Israel and its neighbours will lead to greater stability in the region and eventually result in just and lasting peace for all.

The Czech Republic follows with much concern the security and humanitarian situation in certain African countries, in particular in the Great Lakes region, but also in Somalia and Sierra Leone. We fully support the efforts of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity aimed at putting an end to unrest, wars and suffering in Africa. Positive changes taking place in Liberia, for example, fill us with optimism. We believe that the work done by our own military observers in the operations of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia has also contributed to this progress.

My country wishes to continue to participate in building a global security architecture. Within the United Nations we want to work actively, mainly in the fields of peacekeeping operations, arms control and disarmament. Our military observers, doctors and other medical personnel participate in a number of United Nations peacekeeping operations. A Czech Army battalion has been operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina under NATO command within the multinational Stabilization Force, on the basis of the Security Council mandate. It has been performing its tasks well, and we are pleased that its activities are being viewed positively.

The inclusion of the Czech Republic at the beginning of this year in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations is both a sign of appreciation of our activities in this field and a manifestation of our commitment to participate further in peacekeeping operations and to improve the level of our participation.

The Czech Republic has been actively participating in the field of arms control and disarmament. As a non-nuclear-weapon State, we are naturally interested in attaining universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its strict observance, which, we expect, will lead to the further reduction of nuclear proliferation and will advance the long-term objective of nuclear disarmament. We attach great importance to the sessions of the preparatory committees, and expect that their positive suggestions could set the tone of the Review Conference to be held in the year 2000 towards reinforcing the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Czech Republic has from the very beginning voiced support for the idea of strengthening the international safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency within the so-called 93 +2 Programme. It was within these efforts that the Czech Republic only a few days ago officially informed the

International Atomic Energy Agency's secretariat of its interest in concluding a supplementary protocol to the safeguards agreement between the Czech Republic and the Agency, as required by the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The majority of Member States of the United Nations last year signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and I am pleased to state that my country was one of the first to ratify it.

We welcome the establishment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We expect it to effectively control and carry out the verification process, in which we are prepared to participate fully.

We are convinced that the Biological Weapons Convention needs more effective control mechanisms. To this end, Czech experts are actively participating in talks on finalizing the verification protocol, which will considerably strengthen this Convention.

In the field of conventional weapons, the Czech Republic supports all measures contributing to greater transparency, and has been systematically fulfilling all its obligations concerning notification to the respective registers. At this year's Brussels Conference on anti-personnel land mines, the Czech Republic joined the so-called Ottawa process, and it is prepared to sign in Ottawa early in December a convention on the complete ban of such weapons.

It has been an honour for my country to chair two important United Nations bodies this year. The Economic and Social Council plays a very important role in promoting international cooperation in the economic and social fields. Its reform is therefore very important. The Czech Republic has always stressed the need for better coordination, effectiveness and simplification of the Council's structure and activities. We also believe that when chairing the Council we have helped shape its new image. We noted promising signs of this new image already during its substantive session in July. One example was the high-level segment with participation of ministers and senior government officials, which proved the growing interest of the Member States in discussions on specific subjects. An informal political dialogue with representatives of United Nations funds and agencies also proved the Council's ability to serve as a platform for useful and fruitful exchanges of views. The reform and strengthening of the Economic and Social Council should continue. In this respect, we welcome all steps taken to implement resolution 50/227, and above all to further simplify the structure of the Council's subsidiary bodies.

In its priorities, the Czech Republic pays great attention to the protection of human rights as one of the necessary conditions for free development of human society and democracy. We had the honour to chair the Commission on Human Rights in the first year of our membership in this important body. On the basis of this experience, the Czech Republic has been urging the elimination of factors negatively influencing the work of the Commission, and has been seeking new approaches and methods of dealing with individual cases of flagrant violation of human rights.

Next year the international community will commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We hope that this event will be an occasion not merely for ceremonial assemblies and declarations, but for presenting concrete results of work in the field of human rights.

My country supports all efforts aimed at early establishment of an International Criminal Court, which would create a new system for punishing the most serious crimes of human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law. The need for such an institution is acute, and the Czech Republic fully supports the convocation of a diplomatic conference in 1998 to adopt and open to signature the convention on the establishment of the court.

One of the burning scourges of our world today is the growth of international organized crime and the related problem of drug abuse. This global problem can be solved effectively only through close international cooperation. We believe that the special session of the General Assembly in 1998 will stimulate the strengthening of this cooperation.

Another threat hanging over the world is international terrorism. This is a threat which can be neutralized only by the tough and uncompromising attitude of the international community and by effective international cooperation. Every country sincerely interested in security throughout the world must strictly observe and comply with commitments arising from relevant international instruments. The Czech Republic supports every effort aimed at the elaboration of an international convention for the suppression of terrorist bombings. In this respect, my country has also actively participated in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee set up

to deal with this problem and believes that the current session of experts will make further progress in the finalization of the draft convention so that it may be adopted and opened to signature as soon as possible.

One of the most dynamically developing spheres of international and global cooperation is that of environment and sustainable development. The United Nations has been traditionally working hard in this field. The key, irreplaceable role in this field is played by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. It seems that UNEP is already on the way out of crisis, although not all the problems are solved by any means. The recent establishment of the high-level committee is undoubtedly a step towards improvement of the governing structure of UNEP and towards stabilization of its programme and budget. In a short time we expect the strengthened UNEP to start a new endeavour to fulfil its mandate.

The process of follow-up activities of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was given a new and strong impulse at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly. The results of this special session were not unambiguously positive. On the one hand, we welcome the wide support for the promotion of sustainable development and for efforts of Governments and international organizations, further strengthened by complementary activities of non-governmental organizations, national Governments, entrepreneurial circles and other interest groups. On the other hand, however, the session proved that not all of them are prepared to take resolute steps towards achieving sustainable development.

The tasks facing the United Nations in the next period are numerous and difficult. However, they have been clearly outlined and can be fulfilled. It also depends on us, Member States, whether and how we will cope with them. It is the results of our joint efforts that will decide not only the fate of the world Organization but also of the world itself on the threshold of the next millennium.

The Acting President: I should like to appeal to the participants in the general debate to respect as much as possible the estimated speaking time they have provided to the Secretariat. This would greatly facilitate the work of the General Assembly.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, His Excellency Mr. Irakli Menagarishvili.

Mr. Menagarishvili (Georgia) (*interpretation from Russian*): I should like to begin by congratulating the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, on his election as President of General Assembly at its fifty-second session. This is a compelling acknowledgment of the high international esteem in which Ukraine is held and of Mr. Udovenko's personal qualities and extensive experience. At the same time, I should like to express gratitude to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, Ambassador Razali Ismail, who made a significant contribution to the successful guidance of that session.

It is particularly important for us to be making this statement today from this lofty rostrum. Five years have passed since Georgia became a full-fledged Member of the United Nations. I believe that the time has come to assess the development of Georgian statehood, as well as the results of our full-fledged participation in and active cooperation with the United Nations.

In this five-year period our country has travelled from civil war, chaos, economic collapse and rampant crimes to ever increasing stability, the establishment of democratic institutions and tangible economic progress. The fact that we have been able to emerge with dignity from the most critical phase in our independent development is, to a large extent, to the credit of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, which provided Georgia not only with moral support but with specific and timely financial and technical assistance. We shall always remember that with particular gratitude.

We understand what a responsible task the United Nations has as it

> "strives to articulate an inclusive vision: community among nations, common humanity among peoples, the singularity of our only one Earth." *(A/51/950, para. 1)*

The criterion for the formation of such a vision is the destiny of each people and every State, including Georgia, whose recent history fully and clearly reflects all the virtues and flaws of the present world order. Georgia can thus serve as a model with regard to the need to implement long-awaited changes and radical reforms within the United Nations system. It is precisely on this subject that I wish to share my views.

The global post-confrontational development following the end of cold war has not, unfortunately, been

as simple as had been expected. We have stressed on numerous occasions, including from this rostrum, that the global confrontation between two systems has given way to equally dangerous local and intra-State conflicts that carry within them the potential for enormous destruction, thereby posing the same global challenge to international security. One of the manifestations of this dangerous trend is the aggressive separatism that has plagued my country and several other newly independent States. We have also pointed out that the United Nations and other international organizations should act in a manner that takes account of these changes. Unfortunately, our recent experience shows that, as a result of somewhat entrenched attitudes, these realities are frequently misunderstood.

The main obstacle to the strengthening and development of our statehood and to the full implementation of economic reforms continues to be the lack of a settlement of the conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. The situation in Abkhazia is particularly worrying. About 300,000 refugees and displaced persons from Abkhazia are still unable to return to their homes. These people, whom fate has not treated kindly, are already beginning to lose hope for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. We are obliged to note that, regrettably, the conflict in Abkhazia has become a kind of touchstone exposing the inadequacy of United Nations efforts. We therefore continue to insist on the need to find a new approach that can give a new impetus to the dialogue. We welcome the vigorous steps being taken to strengthen the role of the United Nations in settling the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia.

We have embraced with hope and optimism the new initiatives put forward by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. We would like to stress in particular that we attach importance to the resumption of the Geneva negotiations between the parties to the conflict, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of the Russian Federation as facilitator, the group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We are confident that the Geneva process will not only promote a settlement of the conflict, but will also reveal the transformational role that the United Nations can play under the new conditions. Here I must express deep gratitude to the President of Ukraine, His Excellency Mr. Leonid Kuchma, who, from this lofty rostrum expressed support for the efforts of the United Nations in Abkhazia and reaffirmed Ukraine's readiness to participate directly.

The establishment of a United Nations standby force would be very useful in developing the potential for United Nations peacekeeping operations to prevent the escalation of conflicts in a timely manner. Such forces would be on constant standby. We believe that such a system must include a technically well-equipped and appropriately staffed headquarters. It would be responsible for the evaluation and assessment of emerging conflict situations. On the basis of such assessments United Nations rapid-reaction forces, which have yet to be established, could be quickly sent to zones of conflict. We are confident that, had such forces existed five years ago, the tragic development of the conflict in Abkhazia could have been prevented. As the vicissitudes of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, have shown, there is still a need for clearly coordinated joint actions between the United Nations and regional and international organizations for the settlement of conflicts. The absence of such a practice considerably reduces the effectiveness of the peacekeeping efforts of our community.

Georgia's experience provides a positive example of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. This cooperation includes the joint United Nations-OSCE office for monitoring human rights in Abkhazia and the programme for the economic rehabilitation of the Tskhinvali region, proposed and implemented by the United Nations Development Program. I also believe that we should seriously consider the proposal of the acting Chairman of the OSCE, by which the State chairing that Organization would automatically join the group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia, thereby promoting and increasing cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE. We believe that there is a need to welcome the process of cooperation between the United Nations and regional international organizations, which has already begun.

We should also reconsider the important concept of post-conflict peace-building. We are sometimes prisoners of stereotyped notions of a phased approach to settling conflicts, and as a result we sometimes fail to notice how thin the line is between establishing peace and peacekeeping itself. In the process of conflict settlement it is more effective to use elements of post-conflict peace-building, including them in the strategy of peacekeeping operations. Elements of post-conflict peace-building such as social and economic rehabilitation of conflict zones and the establishment of a basis for their further development would facilitate confidence-building between the parties involved and create a favourable social and

economic environment for the achievement of a final political settlement. We believe that the United Nations should remain actively seized of this matter.

The creation of a special fund would allow the United Nations potential for post-conflict peace-building to be strengthened. "Development dividends" could provide one source of revenue for this. On the other hand, the fund could also consider the economic interests of the parties to the conflict, and on that basis develop relevant projects, thereby assisting in conflict prevention.

The uniqueness and indispensability of the United Nations as a central and multilateral mechanism of cooperation in the post-confrontational world must first and foremost be manifested in its leading role in the creation of a qualitatively new comprehensive system of security, stability and development. The most important role here must be played by a global system of economic security, the formation of which should run parallel with the development of the process of world integration.

A characteristic feature of today's world is that formerly isolated historico-geographic regions are gradually overcoming their isolation and are cooperating to create a shared global infrastructure of human activities. Therefore, regional economic unions should be viewed as a driving force of the mechanisms for building such an infrastructure.

For example, the Caucasus region clearly demonstrates the potential of the so-called graded model of global integration. I refer, in the first place, to subregional cooperation within the framework of a given region and, further, in the light of the geo-strategic situation of the Caucasus, to its role as a link for interregional cooperation, namely between Europe and Asia.

Such a structure for integration, such a global model is in keeping with the realities of our day. We believe that the coordinating role of the United Nations in this process can be very effective.

Such a vision of the role of the Caucasus region has already been embodied in the concept of the Euro-Asian corridor, a kind of Silk Road for the twenty-first century. This historic conduit for trade, the importance of which is continuing to grow and gain in recognition, is already working and proving its effectiveness.

Similar corridors present a unique opportunity for the establishment of new material and cultural values and for bringing economies and cultures together. On this basis, they must — and, unquestionably, will — also play an important role in the establishment and strengthening of stability in the region.

Georgia has been called upon to actively promote the implementation of this concept. Even a superficial glance at a map shows the strategic importance of geopolitical and geo-economic dimensions of this central conduit for world trade. Therefore, we express our readiness to cooperate with all those who are interested in making it a reality.

The broad functions of the United Nations as a universal organization are the basis for the initiatives spelled out by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his report "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform". First and foremost, we believe there is a need to focus on the treaty defining the international legal profile of today's world order: the Charter of the United Nations. Conceived under specific circumstances, it provided a mechanism that was aimed, for the most part, at prevention and settlement of conflicts between States. As a result, the United Nations has often reacted inadequately to such challenges as the numerous conflicts occurring within States. The principles that constituted the basis for traditional peacekeeping operations, in particular the concept of consent of the parties, are often untenable in cases of so-called ethnic conflict. This leads us to the idea that the Charter to a great extent needs to be rethought and made to conform to current realities.

In this regard, Georgia supports the creation of a ministerial commission to study the necessity of fundamental reforms in the Charter and in those legal documents that define the mandates of the United Nations specialized agencies. Georgia also supports the proposal for the appointment of a First Under-Secretary-General who would be called upon to play a special role in ensuring the success of programmes and plans of the various functional sectors of the Secretariat.

Undoubtedly, the crux of the United Nations reforms is the enlargement of the Security Council and the improvement of the activities of the General Assembly and of the other main bodies. Also important is the question of the optimal reallocation of authority between the General Assembly and the Security Council. In this respect, we reaffirm our unwavering position concerning the inclusion of Germany and Japan among the permanent members of the Security Council and also concerning the enlargement of the Council, including adding one seat for the Eastern European countries.

We favour growing transparency in the work of the Security Council. From our point of view, it is important that concerned States be able to participate in informal consultations of the Council, at which substantive discussions take place and decisions are taken.

The international community should also be equipped with reliable tools of justice to enable it to react not only to unlawful actions of States but also to those of individuals who have perpetrated crimes against humanity. In this connection, we call upon all the Member States to do all they can to conclude successfully the diplomatic conference and to adopt a treaty on the establishment of an international criminal court by 1998.

In closing I would like to recall the initiative of the Secretary-General to hold a special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000, as a "millennium Assembly". Very little time remains before mankind enters the new millennium, and we must do everything we can to see to that the reformed United Nations becomes a genuinely new United Nations for the world order of the coming century. I am confident that Georgia, together with other States, will occupy a worthy place in it, as a democratic and prosperous country.

The Acting President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency Dr. Kamal Kharrazi.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran) (*spoke in Persian; English text furnished by the delegation*): Allow me to express my felicitations to the President on his election and express the confidence that, with his wisdom and diplomatic skill, he will ably guide the fifty-second General Assembly towards tangible results. Let me also express my appreciation to his predecessor for his excellent work.

Due to lateness of the hour, I will present a brief version of my statement. The complete text will be distributed.

At the threshold of the third millennium and under the circumstances of unfolding interplay among not one or two but various powers in the shaping of new global decisions, international relations need a new doctrine, commensurate with the evolving conditions and emerging needs. The main objective of this doctrine is the gradual realization of a global civil society, a society where liberty and salvation harmoniously coincide to meet the spiritual and material needs of humanity in an institutionalized manner, and where comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development lies at the foundation of universal cooperation and participation.

The doctrine of global civil society is predicated on two major principles, the first being the institutionalization of the rule of law in domestic and international relations. The international community today, like its constituent Member States, simply cannot provide a peaceful and prosperous life for people through coercion, autocratic decisions and a cultural domination and hegemony. Therefore, the rule of law, as the very foundation of order and the relations among individuals and States, should be institutionalized.

The second major principle is that of empowerment and participation. Similar to the process of participation at the national level — where all individuals, regardless of colour, race, opinion, wealth or social status have an inalienable right to determine their own destiny — countries and regions with differing cultures and resources should enjoy the right and be empowered to participate at all stages of decision-making and policy implementation at the global scale.

Today, North and South constitute two complementary domains in a single global arena. Equilibrium and stability of the future world order depend, in large measure, on the South's contribution to the shaping of the norms governing future international relations.

In our view, we can move towards the gradual realization of a global civil society through institutionalization of these two fundamental principles and by committing ourselves to pluralism, tolerance, dialogue among civilizations, promotion of human rights, comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development, justice and equality of opportunities as the governing norms in our interactions.

The political philosophy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is in full accord with these fundamental foundations of the prospective global civil society. The domestic programme of the new administration is geared towards strengthening the foundations of civil society.

The main features and priorities of the new administration's foreign policy include the following: the expansion of relations with all countries on the basis of mutual respect, common interest and non-interference in the internal affairs of others; emphasis on the

institutionalization of international law as the foundation of global order and as the final arbiter among States; the establishment and strengthening of mechanisms of mutual confidence-building and security through regional cooperation and the negation of the presence and influence of foreign powers; the protection of all human rights and the rejection of attempts at selective and discriminatory abuse of human rights as instruments of policy; emphasis on the fundamental rights of oppressed individuals and nations, particularly the Palestinian people; the arresting of the arms race at the regional and global levels, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the control of conventional weapons; the strengthening of the bonds of amity and solidarity among Islamic and non-aligned countries; an active presence and constructive participation in the United Nations and other international organizations, with an effective contribution in international efforts on global issues such as arms control and disarmament, comprehensive and sustainable development, human rights, peacekeeping and combating terrorism and illicit drugs, as well as the reversal of unjust international arrangements; and, finally, defending the rights of Iranian citizens all over the world.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has adopted concrete measures at the regional and international levels in pursuit of these principled policies, and it is fully prepared to cooperate with all countries towards achieving common objectives in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

The question of Palestine, which lies at the very heart of the Middle East crisis, represents the most vivid and persistent case of disregard for international law and the systematic violation of fundamental human rights of individuals and peoples. The Middle East crisis can be solved only through the full realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, in particular their right to self-determination, the return of refugees and the liberation of all occupied territories, including Al-Quds al-Sharif, southern Lebanon and the Syrian Golan. The experience of the past few years has made it abundantly clear that any scheme or proposal which fails to take into full account the realities in the region or the infamous Israeli patterns of behaviour is bound to fail.

It is indeed unfortunate that some outside powers deliberately misconstrue or misrepresent Iran's frank, open and objective exposé of the realities as support for terrorism and as opposition to peace and security in the region. I reiterate once again that the Islamic Republic of Iran also seeks peace and stability in the Middle East — a just and lasting peace that would receive regional consensus and that would cure this chronic crisis once and for all.

Our region has witnessed for nearly two decades the crisis in Afghanistan. There is, undoubtedly, no military solution to this tragedy; yet some warring factions have yet to realize this evident truth. Only through the establishment of a ceasefire, the cessation of foreign intervention, negotiations between all Afghan groups and the formation of a broad-based Government representing all Afghans can the crisis in Afghanistan find a lasting solution. My Government is determined to continue its humanitarian and peacemaking endeavours in Afghanistan in tandem with the United Nations Secretary-General and the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. I must draw the attention of the international community to the dire need for and the urgency of humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan.

The cold war generated a tendency in internal and external relations which required the existence of a real or imagined enemy. Escaping this state of mind and building a new world based on cooperation and the rule of law requires not only political will, but careful planning in order to foster confidence and to mitigate economic, security and social concerns at national and regional levels.

Confidence-building at national, regional and international levels, as an essential strategy to transform human relations, will not succeed in the absence of transparency in decision-making and the participation of all concerned. The antithesis of universal participation in decision-making and law-based cooperation at the international level is unilateralism. This phenomenon finds its manifestations in various areas, including arms control, development, international trade, the environment and codification of new human rights norms.

The first and most effective step towards building confidence is the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, the reduction of conventional weapons, transparency in the field of armaments and the establishment of security and cooperation schemes in various regions of the globe. This endeavour requires the full and non-discriminatory implementation of existing undertakings in the area of disarmament and security and the development of new rules to address universally accepted priorities, as well as security requirements of the international community and its members.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, on the basis of Islamic principles, considers weapons of mass destruction inhumane and illegitimate. Officials of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have repeatedly confirmed the fact that Iran's nuclear activities are performed within the framework of the Agency's regulations and that they follow peaceful objectives. Despite these clear facts, some Governments have embarked upon a barrage of false and baseless accusations against Iran during the past few years. Yet propaganda campaigns of public deception will certainly not change regional realities on the ground. It is self-evident that the lack of security in the Middle East is rooted in Israel's militarism and its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, which have thwarted all disarmament initiatives and mechanisms in the region.

Furthermore, the unabated race for the acquisition of conventional weapons exacerbates the atmosphere of anxiety and mistrust. The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is founded on peace, self-restraint, confidence-building and the reduction and elimination of tension, particularly within our region. I wish to inform the Assembly frankly and sincerely that of all the countries of the Middle East, Iran allocates the lowest percentage of its budget to its military. In 1995 and 1996, only 3.3 per cent of our gross domestic product was spent on defence. We continue to be ready for any regionally acceptable understanding on further reductions in defence budgets such that the security concerns of large and small countries alike are fully addressed.

The highest foreign policy priority of the Islamic Republic of Iran is to make every effort to strengthen trust and confidence and to build peace in our immediate neighbourhood, which in cases such as Tajikistan has achieved encouraging results. In our region, the Economic Cooperation Organization has also contributed to the expansion and consolidation of relations among its member States through the adoption of common positions and by playing an active role in the field of economic and technical cooperation.

In the Persian Gulf area, only cooperation and collective participation can bring about security and stability for all countries in the region. Taking full advantage of historical affinities, cultural ties and religious bonds and sparing no effort to utilize in an efficient and coordinated manner the human and natural potential and resources of the region constitute the single best long-term guarantee of security and tranquillity. Iran — as the biggest country in the region, enjoying a historical depth of several millennia combined with the richness of Islamic civilization — does not need to engage in any arms build-up or competition. Our message to our neighbours is one of friendship and fraternity, and we shall warmly welcome any initiative to strengthen the foundations of confidence and cooperation in the region.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, which in December will be hosting the eighth Islamic summit, is of the view that on the threshold of the twenty-first century, the primary task of the summit will be to foster mutual confidence and establish mechanisms for cooperation and coordination in various fields among Islamic countries. This will undoubtedly contribute to the further strengthening of the foundations of lasting international security and stability.

Terrorism is the wicked result of widespread lawlessness and the violent obstruction of public participation, which in its various forms and manifestations threatens human societies at the national, regional and international levels. The political exploitation of this international problem, through hurling unfounded allegations in order to advance certain ulterior motives or cover up deficiencies in domestic or external policy, is no less dangerous than terrorism itself. These two elements together diminish trust, stability and security at the regional and the international levels.

Resolution of this destructive problem requires a determined avoidance of sensationalism and demagoguery on the one hand, and a concerted international attempt to find practical measures to combat terrorism that are reasonable, objective and realistic on the other. More important, our collective success requires the non-selective, universal and law-based application of agreed measures by relevant international organizations.

As a country that has suffered immensely from the inhuman phenomenon of terrorism in the post-revolution years, the Islamic Republic of Iran is prepared to take an active part in any international effort to combat this problem in a serious, comprehensive and principled manner.

The resolution of complex international problems and the realization of post-cold-war opportunities require the participation of all members of the international community in the decision-making process, on the basis of the rules and principles of international law. The United Nations is the institutional embodiment of both universal participation and the rule of law on the global scale. It is the only universal organization which, with the

help of an efficient and capable system, can move towards finding solutions to the problems of human society and responding to post-cold-war challenges. The magnitude of this task clearly points to the need to improve the efficiency of the Organization and to enhance its role by embarking on the transformation and reform of the major bodies, programmes and modes of operation of the Organization.

I should like to express appreciation for the Secretary-General's efforts to reinvigorate the Organization, and to assure him of our earnest desire to cooperate with him in the process of restructuring the United Nations into a more efficient, capable and reliable institution responsive to the needs and views of all its Members. In our opinion, the extensive scope and implications of the measures envisaged in the Secretary-General's report of 16 July make it imperative for the General Assembly to establish working groups to examine the report thoroughly and in detail so that the views of all Member States are identified and taken into account.

There is no doubt that the current composition of the Security Council is remote from the state of international affairs today and is not acceptable to the overwhelming majority of the international community. In our opinion, any increase in the membership of the Security Council or reform of its working methods will have to take the true role and concerns of the developing countries into account. Moreover, reform of the working methods of the Security Council should not be contingent upon resolution of the question of the increase in the membership of the Council; they are two distinct subjects and thus require two separate decisions.

The General Assembly is undoubtedly the highest and most representative organ of the United Nations, where all Members of the Organization enjoy an equal right to participate. This body, which comprises the entire membership, certainly has the right — and indeed the responsibility — to address each and every issue of global concern, including in particular those relating to international peace and security.

Expansion and broadening of the participatory base of the future global order on the basis of norms acceptable to all cultures and peoples is most conducive to building a better tomorrow, and to ensuring freedom, security, stability and sustainable development at the national, regional and international levels. The General Assembly, providing all Member States with the opportunity for full and equal participation in decision-making, is the most appropriate venue for dialogue, understanding and the adoption of coordinated international measures to build a better and a more equitable tomorrow.

As the new Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran assumes its responsibilities, I reiterate the willingness and full preparedness of my Government to take a constructive part in this collective endeavour through promoting dialogue, understanding, trust and solidarity.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.